



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

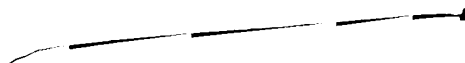
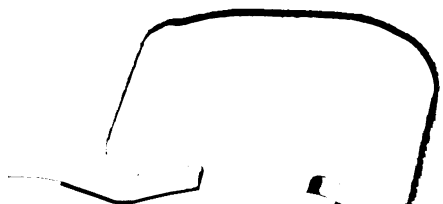
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

3 3433 07489331 8



THE SONG OF THE PINES

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12



A solitary black figure with the gray forms of the sheep—

THE SONG OF THE PINES

73

By
ROBERT VALENTINE MATHEWS

Illustrations by
JAMES VARRIER



31

New York
Edwin C. Hill Company
1906

**COPYRIGHTED, 1906, by
EDWIN C. HILL COMPANY**

EDWIN PRESS

TO MY WIFE

82X48

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A solitary black figure with the gray forms of the sheep . *Frontispiece*

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| The shadows of the clouds passed again and again over the mountains | 31 |
| A night in the Brevoort household | 153 |
| "You dropped this, Ruy," Alen began to say | 287 |

CONTENTS

BOOK FIRST

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. ALLEN THERWITH | 3 |
| II. THE WISE WOMAN | 10 |
| III. THE SEA | 16 |
| IV. THE STORY OF SAINT WINIFRED | 24 |
| V. THE MOST WONDERFUL THING IN THE WORLD . . . | 31 |
| VI. THE WORLD CLAIMS ALLEN | 39 |

BOOK SECOND

| | |
|---|----|
| I. THE WANDERER | 47 |
| II. THE WORTH OF A MAN'S WORD | 51 |
| III. EVIL DAYS | 56 |

BOOK THIRD

| | |
|---|-----|
| PROLOGUE | 61 |
| I. IN WHICH ALLEN THERWITH FINDS A NEW HOME . . | 67 |
| II. A TIME OF PLENTY | 72 |
| III. THE GIRL WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN A BOY . . . | 82 |
| IV. THE NEW MINISTER | 90 |
| V. THE SCHOOL | 98 |
| VI. SAINT NICHOLAS' EVE | 108 |

CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| VII. A SINNER TURNS TO REPENTANCE | 118 |
| VIII. THE STRANGE BOY | 129 |
| IX. THE ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS | 145 |
| X. THE PARTY | 155 |
| XI. IN WHICH ALEN DECEIVES STEPHEN | 170 |
| XII. SUNDAY MORNING | 180 |
| XIII. STEPHEN'S RESOLVE | 188 |
| XIV. IN WHICH THE ELDERS' REQUEST IS REFUSED | 201 |
| XV. RED LANE | 229 |
| XVI. IN WHICH STEPHEN IS ALONE | 240 |
| XVII. NIGHT | 246 |
| XVIII. THE SHADOWS ON THE SHADE | 252 |
| XIX. THE LITTLE BOX | 260 |
| XX. IN THE SCHOOLHOUSE | 266 |
| XXI. A CONSPIRACY WHICH FAILS | 274 |
| XXII. THE HUT IN THE VALLEY | 284 |
| XXIII. THE TWO BROTHERS | 290 |
| XXIV. DOROTHEA'S BURDEN | 298 |
| XXV. THE SIN OF STEPHEN LANE | 304 |
| XXVI. "STEPHEN" | 312 |
| XXVII. THE SONG OF THE PINES | 323 |
| XXVIII. STEPHEN RECOUNTS THE NIGHT IN THE HUT | 330 |
| XXIX. THE ELDERS' REQUEST IS COMPLIED WITH | 340 |
| EPILOGUE | 349 |

BOOK FIRST

Youth looks with unseeing eyes

Down the years.

Fancy finds for him Hopes

Without Fears.

But Age looks back with eyes that see

The long-lost Hopes, the Fears,

The lonely, bitter Years.

Yet still the Heart finds strength to be

So brave, so true, so pure,

So full of Faith, so sure

Of Joy for all Eternity.



CHAPTER I

ALLEN THERWITH

WHEN the years of one's life are but twelve, it is not strange for the whole world to be bounded by the mountains about a little valley. So it was with Allen, whose father was Llywelyn Therwith, a sheep herder, and whose mother had slept for long in the graveyard hard by the Holy Well of Saint Winifred.

Up to the time our story begins, there had been none but the father and the sheep and the dogs in the valley, and because the father would not and the sheep and the dogs could not, no one shared the child-world of the small boy. Even in those early years, it was true of him as of every child who first sees the light of day among the mountains, that their image was fixed indelibly upon him. His restlessness and eagerness was the spirit of the tumbling streams of those Welsh mountains, and his physical strength and delight in using it, part of the ruggedness about him.

There was to be a time when the mountains themselves would be forgotten, but their effect was never to be lost through all the years to come. Just as the blood of one's ancestors is stronger than the changes that come in the life of a man, so Allen Therwith, whose forefathers helped to make the stormy history of Wales, could not be made over in a day, but must

4 THE SONG OF THE PINES

go on to the end, even as they did, eager to gain the mastery over others—a stranger, quite, to quiet and content.

Often the great changes in life come unheralded and unnoticed. Thus it was with Alen Therwith, (at least in those early years) so that the boy was conscious of no change at all, until at last the day came when he had bidden good-bye to those mountains and to the little valley.

Because of his father's domination, because they were so isolated, Alen's world was but of his own making. It had never been other than narrow, with nothing to redeem its selfishness or to change it or to throw aside the drudgery and monotony before their ill effects became too strong.

Llywelyn Therwith was a man willing to live as his father before him, and with no ambition other than to make his son another man such as he. With none to interrupt him, his efforts to stamp himself indelibly upon Alen were likely to become speedily successful, yet in the end, his failure was due to his own eagerness, to his unwillingness to try to understand Alen. For in Llywelyn Therwith, the wild, untamed spirits of the boy were found in the man's determination, that would brook neither restraint nor the suggestions of reason even for the sake of achieving his desire. So in this little out-of-the-way corner of the world, we find the man's own stubborn, unbending nature, his selfishness, causing him to fail in something which he desired dearly. In the years to come, Alen himself, perhaps, would fail thus too.

As time went on, Llywelyn Therwith's efforts only served to make Alen Therwith less manageable, filling the boy's heart with a stronger resentment toward his father, toward anything tending to control, growing more silent and taciturn, brooding over fancied as well as real wrongs with all the intensity of a strong, young nature.

Sometimes the boy wondered what his father did through the long days. His own duties he knew well, for on the young shoulders fell all the work, the care of the sheep, the garden and the small field that was tilled. Llywelyn Therwith's manner forbade questioning, but the boy became more and more curious about it, as the years passed.

Often when he returned at night, Llywelyn Therwith's eyes shone strangely as do a man's whose whole being has become eager in some seeking. That there was no mystery in all of this will show you how slowly Alen's mind developed in that isolated home, and how, through lack of contact with others, he knew nothing of all that lay just beyond his horizon. At the time our story begins, the lad's body, strong and vigorous, had far outstripped his mind, delaying its awakening until the years of manhood were almost upon him.

Two thousand years before, the men of Rome conquered the southland, and drove the Welsh people back among these very mountains. There were men even then who did as Alen's father, for in the mountains there was gold,—glittering, yellow gold, to possess which, as in even these days, men bartered all that was theirs, even honour.

6 THE SONG OF THE PINES

So it was that Llywelyn Therwith stole away each day to seek with a determination worthy of a better cause, the slender hoard of precious metal that lay hidden among the rocks, returning when night had fallen with, perhaps, some slight measure of success, only to start forth again with the new day as eagerly as before.

There was no novelty about this, and perhaps there was no harm in it all to the self-seeking Welshman. Yet had it not been so, I can see a better, braver youth starting forth from that house in the Cardiganshire valley, one more fitted to cope with the world. In both of them, father and son, where we might hope to have found ambition to do great deeds and the splendid things their forefathers had done before them, we find only a touch of the spirit of adventure, a trace of the self-reliance and vigour of an olden time. With Alen, as with his father, superstition and fatalism, selfishness and self-satisfaction took the place of nobler things, without the strength of purpose to mould himself more worthily.

As the boy grew, his father insisted on his doing an ever-increasing share of the work, though his portion was already far in excess of his years. It is not to be wondered at that this made Alen the more bitter and unhappy, and destroyed any affection that he might ever have had for his father. Indeed, it is doubtful if in all the world there lived two as close together as these must needs have been, yet separated always by an impenetrable barrier of mistrust and almost hatred.

It was in the Spring of 1822 that Alen Therwith

became twelve years of age. The anniversary of the day of his birth passed unmarked and unnoticed, as uneventfully as all the other days that had been his since the beginning.

But if the days were long, the almost endless twilights were longer still. To father and son alike they were unendurable, and each formed the habit of returning later and later for the evening meal, until usually night had quite fallen before they reached the house.

The candle-light showed them one night at their frugal meal at the rough table. Llywelyn Therwith, black-haired and with skin yellow from exposure and marked with deep wrinkles, eyes that pierced the dim light of the room like some wild hawk or bird of prey, and Alen, with the eyes and hair of his father, but with rounded, youthful face, made no exception that night to their habit of silence. And it was as well that it was so, else there would never have been an end to the fault-finding of the father, and the bitter, uncontrolled replies of the boy.

The simple meal was finished before Llywelyn Therwith spoke to his son.

"I will feed the sheep to-night," he said.

Alen looked up in surprise. It was the first time within his memory that his father had done other than add to his duties.

"Why?" asked Alen sharply.

There was no reply, and the boy did not repeat his question. To be ignored was usual. He did not even trouble to resent it. At last his father turned toward him.

8 THE SONG OF THE PINES

"Go to bed," he said. "You'll be wiser to-morrow."

Alen Therwith rose and walked out of the room without a word. Yet once in his bed, he did not seek the dreamless sleep that comes with youth and strength and the long day in the sunshine on the mountains. He only wanted to be alone, to brood over the wrongs that had been done him, to cherish every hurt, to dwell upon and magnify the injustice of it all, to fill his whole childish spirit with resentment and distrust and hatred.

An hour later, Llywelyn Therwith went to his son's bedside. The boy was wide awake. Alen's shrill voice broke the silence.

"Tell me what it is," he demanded. "I always feed the sheep."

He evidently feared that he had been detected in some misdeed. Although Alen did not notice it, his father's voice was almost kind.

"Boy," he said, "someone's coming here to live with us; a woman from England, an artist woman who is going to paint pictures and live in this house."

The boy sat up in bed. His small hand was clenched tight and his eyes flashed defiance at his father.

"I don't want her," he cried. "She sha'n't come."

Llywelyn Therwith looked at his son sternly. When he spoke, the old dominant tone had driven out all that might have been more gentle.

"She's coming to-night, Alen. See to it that you behave yourself and wait on her, otherwise she'll be

going away, which will lose me more money than this place makes for me in a year."

Alen was speechless with anger. He turned his back upon his father and then lay down on the little bed with his face toward the wall. For a full minute, Llywelyn Therwith stood looking at his son, his own face pale with anger too, now. Then he went slowly out of the room. Alen listened defiantly to his retreating steps.

"I don't want her! She sha'n't come!" he muttered again.

CHAPTER II

THE WISE WOMAN

DAWN had not yet come when Alen opened the door at the back of the house and walked along the path to the small enclosure where the sheep were already standing with their noses turned patiently toward the house, awaiting the coming of their young master. They were eager to be out on the mountains, now that winter was gone, now that there were no more long nights with the snow drifting deep through their sheltered yard, for the days had come again when the sunshine lay warm on the mountain-side, and green, tender grass was to be found there.

Soon they were on their way, Alen trudging behind with the dogs close at his heels, his rough coat buttoned about him, for the morning air was sharp and he was still heavy with sleep. Because of this, and because, too, his young mind had grown sluggish with the familiarity and sameness of all about him, he did not turn at the sound of the door of the house opening, but continued on his way through the darkness, a solitary, black figure with the grey forms of the sheep close before. Yet had he turned, there is no doubt he would have thought his eyes deceived him, or that the spirits of the mountains had worked a miracle, for there on the porch of his father's house, was the figure of a woman looking after him through the gloom, and from the beginning of his life, such

a thing had not been true. But it was no miracle, for the woman walked down the path after him, so swiftly, indeed, that she was close behind him as he stopped to fasten the gate at the lower end of the path. The woman smiled at him.

"This is Alen," she said.

Astonished at the sight of her, and because, too, she spoke to him in a strange tongue that should have been his mother tongue, had not these very mountains of Wales built a barrier so high and insurmountable about its people that the language of England was not their own, Alen could only stand and look. Then he turned away quickly, as though to shut the sight of her from him. Resentment at her intrusion rose within him and her one word he understood sounded strange from her lips, even though it was his own name.

The woman tried again.

"I have come to live at your house. I came last night after you were asleep."

Alen looked at her defiantly. The resentment was stronger now. He turned abruptly, and whistling to the dogs, walked on after the sheep. The woman smiled again, and opening the gate, followed after him.

"I forgot he could not understand," she said softly to herself.

Then the boy and the sheep were forgotten, because dawn had come far up in the Welsh mountains, and a woman was there who could see with eyes that understood.

First, it was a line of pink on the clouds, then a

12 THE SONG OF THE PINES

brighter hue and the pink touched the tops of the mountains themselves, while all the valleys lay wrapped in their slumber-robe of darkness, darkness that was deeper because of the pines and hemlocks standing like countless armies in the shadow of the hills. Then that which had been darkness changed to grey, and the grey was touched with rosiness and the rosiness became daylight, and all that had been weird in the darkness was familiar again.

That day, neither the woman nor the boy knew of the many, many mornings they were to spend thus, or the days through the years to come when they would sit for hours on some mountain-top, looking across the valley to the hills and mountains, and then back to the sheep grazing below them; days in which the woman was to find in nature all about her the rest and comfort that was denied her elsewhere, while Alen learned, (but how slowly, and with what patience on his teacher's part!) to speak the language the woman brought with her to his home.

Gradually, after many long months, the new tongue made possible a new point of view and a knowledge of other places lying beyond the Welsh mountains, places of which Alen believed even his father knew nothing, and the day came when this knowledge was to change the whole course of Alen's life.

As time went on, the woman worked at her art, and the boy, in spite of himself, gained each day some new thing. Yet through it all, Alen Therwith was not conscious of the fact that he was learning and developing. Then, too, Alen was gradually drawn into a state of companionship with the woman, though

almost against his will. At first, curiosity more than anything else, the desire to watch her as she worked, to see the outlines of the mountains and trees find their way upon her canvas, led Alen back again and again to where she sat. Sometimes when the woman spoke to him, Alen would go away, quickly and resentfully, as on that first day. Then the woman would smile, and when he came again, she would let him stand for long without even seeming to notice him.

The weeks and months lengthened, and all this grew as the boy himself, till it was no longer a child tending sheep and a woman walking beside him, speaking in a language he could not understand. Now it was a trusted friend, a man in stature and almost in years. The woman looked at him, and there was something very like pride in her eyes.

"Alen," she said, "do you remember the first morning I came here? You are sixteen, now, and almost a man."

"Yes," said Alen, "I am almost a man, and tending the sheep as if I were still a child."

"Sometimes I wonder," she said, "whether the things I have taught you have made you restless and dissatisfied, or whether it is only because you are young and strong."

Then seeing he did not comprehend her, she was about to continue, when he sprang to his feet, crying:

"There's that old rascal at it again!" and ran down the hill after one of the sheep which was endeavouring to climb a low stone wall. The dogs followed Alen as he ran, barking and jumping about him.

14 THE SONG OF THE PINES

Alen seized the sheep as it stood on top of the wall, and pulled it toward him, turning so that the woman saw his flushed face and his eyes blazing with anger.

"I'll teach you!" he cried, and gathering all his strength, he lifted the sheep bodily and threw it against the wall. Down it tumbled and lay struggling at his feet, while the dogs seized and shook it. The woman hurried down the hill.

"Alen, Alen," she cried, "what are you doing! You have hurt the poor sheep!"

Alen struck it with his foot.

"Its back is broken, I guess," he said sullenly. "Anyway, it won't bother us again!"

"Oh, Alen!" exclaimed the woman, "aren't you sorry? Don't you know the sheep had no chance against your strength? Just see it suffer," she went on, bending over it. "Do kill it and put it out of its pain."

Again Alen struck it with his foot.

"Let it lie there a while," he said. "It'll do it good."

The woman pushed him away.

"You shall not," she cried. "I had no idea you were so cruel, that you could stand here and see it suffer."

The sheep's struggles grew less and less, and now it lay quiet, only the quick coming and going of its breath showing that life was still there. The dogs were nosing and poking it about. The woman stood looking for a moment, then without a word, turned away. Alen strode after her.

"You shall not go," he said quietly. All his anger

was gone now, though his chest still heaved from the exertion. The woman stopped and looked at him steadily.

"Aren't you sorry?" she said.

"Sorry?" he asked. "Why?"

And then, because he did not understand, he looked with wonderment at the tears in the woman's eyes. The woman looked down at the sheep.

"It is quite dead," she said at last. "Put it where the dogs won't bother it."

Alen only shrugged his shoulders.

"It's easier to let it be," he said. "The birds will soon eat it up," and he turned and walked away. The woman followed quickly behind him.

"Alen," she said, "I can't bear to see you so. Don't you remember all I have told you of Saint David, and how he told his people to be kind to everyone, and especially to dumb animals, who have none but us to care for them?"

Alen turned to her angrily.

"This isn't church," he said, "and besides, it's only one sheep more or less. We have so many, it doesn't make any difference."

The woman, because she was wise, said nothing more, then.

CHAPTER III

THE SEA

ONCE they wandered far around to the western side of the mountain. It was early morning, and the sunlight lay bright on the mountain sides, and the peaks rose through the clear air until it seemed as if they touched the sky itself. Four counties were within their view. To the north, the peaks of Merionshire and Montgomeryshire, outlined sharply against the blue, told of the higher summits of the Berwyn mountains. Behind them and to the east, lay the valley we have already tried to describe, with the Severn flowing down through the county of Radnor; then about them was their own Cardiganshire. Far off to the west on the edge of the salt sea, they could distinguish the town of Aberystwyth. It was on this side of the mountain that the Rheidol flowed swiftly down through the short miles to Cardigan Bay.

For a long time Alen and the woman stood looking down at this world spread out before them. Then the woman pointed out to Alen the blue waters of the Bay, far in the distance. So they stood, neither of them speaking. Even the woman was beginning to learn this trick of the mountains, this habit of being silent. Long, long ago she had learned what silence means, yet not the silence of the mountains. She knew what it meant to have found another with whom

there was a bond of sympathy and understanding so complete as to make words commonplace and useless. Silence such as this leads human nature to the high plane God meant for it, for men and women then bear toward each other the relationship that enables them to truly help each other without fear and without shame. It is only then the twists and turns that custom and convention give to these poor lives of ours are once and for all thrown aside, and men and women are alike, in that each is his or her true self, noble and brave and pure.

Yet among the mountains this woman was learning a new silence, in one of the true silent places of the world. So it was that except for the boy, she found no companion save God himself, who spoke to her in all that she saw, in all that she tried to place on her canvases, in the sky and the mountains, in the trees and in the fresh, pure air, finding in the silence nothing to distract, so that her work was the better for it, so that she herself was more noble, more tender, than she otherwise would have been.

At last, with a quick movement as though to throw aside the spell the scene wrought upon her, the woman turned to Alen.

"Over there," she said, indicating the east, "is my country, and there," pointing toward the west, "is the sea. Have you ever been to the sea, Alen?"

The boy shook his head.

"Then some day you must. I can tell you of my country," she went on, "and of the people there and the things they do, but the sea is quite beyond being described. I could not begin to tell you of it, Alen.

It is more beautiful and wonderful than anything else."

Alen laughed incredulously.

"You are always telling me our mountains are beautiful," he said. "Is the sea more beautiful than they are?"

"I don't believe you know what I mean by beautiful," she replied. "How many times have I tried to point out to you the wonderful things all about you here where you have always lived? And they don't mean any more to you than before."

Alen stirred uneasily. He did not like to have his self-complacency disturbed. The woman did not notice him.

"You," she went on, "do not seem to have any of the imagination that your people are supposed to. Have you ever tried to picture where this little stream flows after it leaves your valley?"

"Why, no. Where does it go?" said Alen curiously.

When she began to speak, he settled himself comfortably on the ground beside her, listening with apparent delight to every word, as she traced the course of the stream down the mountains and through the level country, past farms and green meadows, through the towns, to the sea. When she was ended, Alen drew a long breath.

"Is it all true?" he asked. Then, "When you said the sea is beautiful, I guess you meant it is like the places where the river flows."

The woman laughed and shook her head.

"You will never understand, Alen," she replied.

"Ever since I came here, I have been trying to tell you only pure and true things, trying to get you to know a little, at least, of all you must make part of yourself before you can become the wise and good man I pray you are to be. But thus far, the valley and these mountains, and even the one or two people you know, mean so little to you, that I wonder what you will ever be worth either to yourself or to anyone else. Have you ever thought, Alen, what you are going to do when you are quite a man?"

"Why, yes," he answered. "Some day this land will be mine, and then I will live here as father does now. Tell me more about the sea," he said abruptly. "Where does it go to?"

The woman felt his desire to change the subject.

"Oh," she replied uncertainly, "it leads to all sorts of strange countries and people. You would have a fine time sailing in a ship and seeing all the queer places it stopped at."

Alen's eyes were eager now.

"That would be splendid," he said. "I should like to sail in a ship."

"But don't you see, Alen," she said, "if you are satisfied to live here with your father, you can never see all these things."

"I know a boy who lived in the next house," he replied, "who went away to sea. Some day I'll go," he said confidently.

The woman looked at Alen and then away again, far down the slope of the mountains and beyond, to where earth and sky met.

Her thoughts travelled down through the years

that, when they were ended, would hold in them the record of Alen Therwith's life. For the moment, she let doubt take the place of the happier hopes she had for his future. She saw circumstances crowding in upon him until there was neither time nor desire for him to pause and contemplate how far he was wandering from the nobler self that might have been. She saw him, too, in a later time, pointing to his triumphs in the material work of the world. She was sure they would be great triumphs, yet the thought hurt her, for her heart saw the bareness of it all. She knew well what sort of success Alen would achieve, the success of a strong man among other men who are strong. She saw him so willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of what he might gain for himself. The woman thought of a day when Alen Therwith would realise that which turns all such success into bitterness, opening his eyes in an instant to how empty and lonely the years had been.

It was hard enough to have him gain such success when it might have been so much more noble, so much more unselfish, yet the woman hoped he would be spared the unhappiness of coming to know the falseness and shame of it all, when it was too late to change even the least part.

Then she thought of the one thing that might come to him, blotting out in an instant all the selfishness, all the desire for self-gratification, all the harder, coarser nature, making of Alen the gentle, true man she wanted him to be. The thought of it made her look at him. Alen's face was half turned from her, so that the strong profile with its high forehead and

prominent nose, with its strong chin, could be watched unobserved. Self-reliance and determination were written there, a strong purpose, whether it be right or wrong.

In spite of herself, she saw what a woman will find in a man if it is there, the selfishness, the meanness, the desire for the gratification of self, the willingness to hold nothing sacred that the man wants for his own. She tried to picture the woman who was, perhaps, to share Alen's life. It was easy to imagine the strong, graceful figure that would match Alen's manhood. She would, of course, be beautiful. It hurt the woman to know that that was all Alen would care about. He would never want to know more of the woman herself, of her heart. It would all be easy for Alen, so long as she pleased him, so long as she let him have his own way, so long as she kept her heart from asking of him that which he could not understand. The woman saw then the power Alen's selfishness might give him to hurt this other woman. Through the years there might be for her neither help nor comfort, no way of hiding herself from Alen, no matter how her heart might cry out for a way to escape. Only Alen could save himself from becoming such a man, from doing so irreparable a harm. The woman there on the mountain that day found her hands stretching themselves out toward him, as though he were indeed her own son, to save him from himself before it was too late.

There came over her a sense of her own failure, of the lack of that in herself which could touch Alen, which could soften him and make him forget his own

22 THE SONG OF THE PINES

pleasure and himself. Though she knew Alen was but as many, many other men, still the woman wanted him to be different, to be better.

"Alen," she said at last, "every day when I work, we will try to talk of something worth while, so that you will not grow to be a man who knows nothing, and I a stupid old woman. I want you to become so splendid, so generous and unselfish, I want you to be so wise, that you will know more than other people, and so be able to guide and help them."

Alen laughed.

"I know enough, I guess."

"Perhaps enough for here," replied the woman, "but it will be different if you go out into the world."

"I'll get on all right," he said confidently. "I'll be able to look after myself."

"Why do you always think of yourself, Alen?" asked the woman. "You never speak unless you have to, yet when you do, it is always of yourself. You are like your father, because you never speak unless you are spoken to. I think that before I came, your house must have been the most silent in Wales."

"I guess you are right," said Alen slowly. "No one has ever talked to me as you have."

"Did your father never tell you of anything besides what you had to know to do your work?" she asked.

"No," he said at last, "not that I can remember, except once. Once he spoke to me of my mother. I remember he was not well. My father said:

"'I am very low, Alen. Maybe it's the last time. Maybe you'll be putting me by your mother before

the week is out.' It was the first time I could remember that he had spoken of my mother.

" 'Tell me about her,' I asked. But he turned away from me in his bed.

" 'What is there to tell that one like you could understand?' he said."

There was an unconscious pathos in Alen's voice as he recited this incident, and the woman's heart softened toward him as she listened, because she hoped that at last she had found a trace of gentleness in him. But Alen had already forgotten his last words.

"Tell me again," he said abruptly, "about the Holy Well of Saint Winifred."

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF SAINT WINIFRED

ALLEN THERWITH never knew why the woman looked at him for so long a time before she began the story. He was quite unconscious of what his words suggested to her. By the Holy Well of Saint Winifred was the grave of Allen Therwith's mother. At Allen's asking for the story, the woman thought of the one whose place she had tried to take, of this mother whom God had wanted to sleep while her boy grew to manhood through the silent, lonely years of his youth. It was of this the woman was thinking, wondering, too, how much of the mother was in the boy, and what she would have tried to make of her son, had she been spared.

"Once upon a time," the woman began at last, "there was a beautiful young woman, whose father, you remember, had the same name as yours, Allen, the name of Therwith."

Allen nodded his head.

"As you know," the woman continued, "we call her now Saint Winifred. It was her uncle, so the story goes, who, long before, founded the Church of Clynnog in Caernarbonsire, so that all the people in that part of the land knew of her uncle and of her father, and of Saint Winifred herself, and because of her goodness and beauty, they were proud of her. Once a Prince came that way, and some hastened to

him to tell him of Saint Winifred and her beauty. When the Prince saw her, he quite agreed with all the people had told him. As for Saint Winifred herself, she would not so much as even smile at the Prince. Indeed, it has been said that she despised him, because, when he looked upon her, she saw that it was with no good thoughts, but only selfishly.

"One day when they were far up the mountain side, the Prince became so angry because Saint Winifred would not be kind to him, that he took his axe and cut off her beautiful head, and it went rolling down the side of the mountain to the altar of the church where the congregation was kneeling. And just there, the wonderful fountain that has ever since been called the Holy Well, gushed up for the first time. Saint Winifred, snatching up her head, put it in its place again, the mark of the axe being but a white circle about her throat.

"What became of the Prince?" asked Alen.

"The wicked Prince," said the woman, "met the fate he deserved, for he died on the spot, and his descendants were condemned to bark like dogs until such time as they should win the Saint's pardon. As for Saint Winifred herself, she lived more than fifteen years after that, and became the Abbess of the Monastery of Gytheyn. And, Alen," the woman went on, "the wonderful part of the story is that the Holy Well never freezes even in the most bitter weather, and all about the edge of it is sweet scented moss, and to this day on the stones by its side can be seen the red stains of Saint Winifred's blood."

Alen listened in wonder to it all. Stories of saints,

26 THE SONG OF THE PINES

stories of the church, were beginning to have their influence on him. He believed them all implicitly. It was because she saw this dawning belief that the woman hoped to lead Alen to a faith in the church itself.

But in this she had to go even more cautiously, for Alen resented anything that might be termed teaching. Time and again the woman saw the space between them widen, as Alen withdrew from her because for a moment he was led to suspect that there was something in what she was telling him to be applied, perhaps, to himself, something from which he was to learn.

It seemed a thing unexplained to the woman, that here, removed but a few miles from her own land of England, Alen Therwith should be approaching years of maturity, knowing as little of his God and his church as though they were almost unheard of. Often the woman asked in secret for strength and wisdom to teach him to understand. From her own experience she knew how, in the time to come, Alen would find the need, as she had done, of the strength and comfort God wanted him to have.

Once she told Alen the story of the coming of the Christ-child, and he listened with ill-concealed impatience. Later, she tried again with more caution, but with no greater measure of success. But the woman was not discouraged. The least she could do was to try again, that Alen would at any rate have heard, even though he remembered none of it.

"Alen," she asked, "do you know what it means to be unselfish?"

"Unselfish?" he replied doubtfully.

"Then I will tell you," she went on. "It means that a person should be willing to give up something that he has or that he wants, in order to let another person be happy. Are you quite sure you understand that?"

Alen Therwith shook his head.

"I understand what you say," he said, "but I don't see why a person should do that."

"He does it to make himself happy, Alen," replied the woman.

"I don't see how that will make him happy. When I want a thing, it makes me happy to get it, not to let someone else have it."

Alen was interested enough to talk at least. Encouraged, the woman took up her task bravely.

"After a while, Alen," she said, "you will know that of which I am speaking, the happiness that comes from being unselfish. Not only is it hard to understand at first, but even when we are old, it is a difficult task to give up what we dearly desire, yet it is only by doing so that we can find the happiness that will last."

The woman saw that Alen did not follow her, so she began again.

"You remember the story I told you of the baby that was born in a manger?"

"Yes," said Alen simply.

"Well," the woman continued, "when that baby grew to manhood and the people knew that He was Christ, God said to Him, 'You must give up your life for the sake of all the rest of the world.' God

wanted it to be that His son should live for a while, guided only by what was right, so there would be actually one who never thought of himself, or of his own happiness before that of others. He should be willing to give up everything he possessed, even his own life, for the sake of others. For only in this way could the world be made better."

The woman paused. She was not sure that Alen understood.

"For a while," she went on, "after He knew what His Father wanted Him to do, He was very troubled, for Christ wanted to live just as you and I do and to go about among the people doing good. Then He remembered that His Father in Heaven was wiser than He. So He said to Him, 'Father, I am quite ready to do whatever you wish.'

"Christ gathered round Him those men who loved Him, and He told them He was going away. They wanted Him to stay and He replied in such wonderful words, Alen, that they have not been forgotten even to this day, for he said, 'Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe ye also in me. For in my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.' And then soon after, just as God had planned it to be, some evil men came and took Him away and killed Him. So it came to pass that Christ gave everything He had for you and me, Alen, and for everyone else in the world, too. Only we must try to be as He was."

Alen Therwith, the philosopher, shook his head.

"There is no one like that," he said.

Because she knew he was right, the woman could only be silent. At last she said:

"There is no one now quite like that, Alen, but some are more unselfish than others."

"I don't want to be like Christ," said Alen. "I want to live as long as ever I can, and to have a good time."

"I am almost sure," said the woman, "that some day you will want other things besides enjoying yourself. Perhaps there may even come a time when you will be quite willing to die."

"What does it mean to die?" asked Alen.

For a while the woman did not know how to reply. The question was one to which she felt that, perhaps better than anyone else, she had learned the answer. Yet she knew Alen referred only to the mere physical death. Should she tell him of the death of the spirit as well, that leaves heart and soul to go on forever, desolate and lonely? There would be time enough for him to know of this in his own life. Then she said:

"To die only means, Alen, that God does not need us in this world any more. He wants us to go to another place, to be busy and happy there. Just what we are to do there, I do not know, nor does anyone else, for one who dies never returns. But I do know that if we have done things here as we should, we are sure of being happy always after we are dead."

Alen looked at her doubtfully.

"I know of people who have died," he said. "They don't go away. They're buried in the ground like mother was."

"It is only the body, Alen," she said slowly. Then

because she saw he did not comprehend, she said no more lest her inability to explain to Alen all he wished to know would only raise doubts in his mind, and they were doubts she could not bear him to have. The mother heart that was in her cried out that he might believe. Oh, that all the sons of the world might come to know how their mothers yearn over them, how they want them to know the good and to become the noble men they are capable of being. Why, then, must the sons fail?

Because she was a woman and this was a motherless boy, she tried to give to Alen Therwith some part of the good that was in her own heart, and he, lest he be different from most other sons, listened and heeded not.

CHAPTER V

THE MOST WONDERFUL THING IN THE WORLD

THERE was one spot that the woman liked best of all. Far, far up on the mountain a single, level rock projected clear from the side of the mountain itself, like a tiny shelf set in its place by some giant hand. There Alen would leave her each morning while he and the sheep wandered up and down along the mountain side, and there she would work through the long hours of the day. Often Alen would find his way back and, sitting on the rock beside her, watch her while she painted. But the work was always soon forgotten, for the woman must needs often look at the scene she was trying to reproduce upon the canvas, and as she looked, the artist was lost in the dreamer, and small wonder was it that this was so.

Far below the forest crept up the side of the mountain like a green sea, reaching nearly to this rock, the tallest pine trees stretching themselves up almost to her feet. Opposite, another mountain rose as abruptly, and in the deep valley between, a stream twisted and turned and tumbled down the steep descents like a blue thread amid the green. Beyond and to the east and so far beneath as to seem at her feet, lay the more open country, through which, but quietly now, flowed the stream. The shadows of the clouds passed again and again over the mountains and the

valley, over the face of the land, and the tops of the trees far below swayed in the wind as do fields of grain. In it all there was no sign of life, nothing to show that man had ever come either to the mountains or the valley, though sometimes in the late afternoon, there would rise out of the valley one slender column of blue smoke, straight up through the still air. Then the woman knew that Llywelyn Therwith was at home and that the evening meal was being prepared, and she would put away her brushes reluctantly because the day was ended.

The companionship of these two was certainly in keeping with all that was about them. Often neither would speak for half a day at a time, the woman painting or gazing off into the valley and Alen half asleep, his strong young figure stretched out in the sunshine. He was used to this, used to watching her gaze for a long, long time without so much as moving, lost in wonder at it all.

There was one day Alen never forgot. Perhaps it was because all she said to him was concerning things he could not understand, for human nature has a queer way of always trying to absorb and make part of itself whatever is almost beyond its comprehension.

For a while the woman painted. At last she laid aside her brushes and rose, stretching her arms wide apart, and stood for a moment in this queer attitude. Then without a word, she sank down on the ground beside Alen and began to cry. So new and inexplicable was it that Alen could only look on in wonderment. Something in the way she sat, with her head bowed on her knees, and perhaps, too, because her

hair had become loosened until now it fell about her shoulders, Alen found himself asking whether if, after all, she was as old and grown up as he had always thought of her as being, until that moment. For no reason at all, Alen laughed aloud.

At the sound the woman raised her head and when she spoke her voice had a queer little break in it that Alen could not understand. Neither did he comprehend all she said to him, and perhaps, after all the story is told, there never came a day when he did know the full meaning of it.

"I do not mind," she said simply. "Your laughter is no harder to bear than this silence everywhere."

She seemed to forget that this was a man now, here beside her—that the boy Alen had gone with the passing years.

"Sometimes," she said, "sometimes I think I cannot bear it. Do you hear the sound of the wind in the trees, Alen? Listen to it now, there in the pine trees. It is the same sound that a wave makes when it breaks on a sandy beach. Once I thought it was the most beautiful, the most comforting sound in all the world. That was so long ago. I am young yet and there are years and years in which I shall always hear the sound just so. Sometimes I wonder why God ever taught me to know what it means, only to have it turn all the years into loneliness."

The woman paused. Alen was silent.

"Think," she went on, "of what I mean by being lonely, not as you find it up here in these mountains with just your father and the sheep, but a loneliness that is not taken from you, no matter where you may

go or how hard you try to banish it. Oh, to be strong, to be noble enough, to be made only better by it all. That is where I fail, Alen. I see the woman I could have been, the woman I could have made of myself because God had let me understand. I have seen it always, only I have not been strong enough."

Something in the boy's face made her pause. Her hand sought her loosened hair with the quick, deft movement that has been woman's through all the ages. The familiar motion brought her back to a realisation of herself.

"Why, Alen," she said, "what nonsense I've been talking to you."

And then because he still stared at her in wonderment, she went on more slowly.

"Only, Alen, it isn't nonsense. It is something that hurts me so, something I hope you will never know of, if it is going to bring you what it has brought me."

"I don't understand," said Alen slowly.

"Neither did I," replied the woman, as if in answer to a question, "neither did I for a long, long time. I went through the world as lightly and carelessly as you have, seeing and understanding so little, listening to the strange voices within me and in nature all about me without knowing or caring what they said."

Again she had forgotten Alen and was speaking only to the inner self, the real self, and her heart gloried in the acknowledgment her lips were making of the great secret she had come to know, so that even the loneliness it brought her was forgotten in the blessedness of understanding at last.

"It is worth it all," she went on, "all that I have ever suffered, just to know it. What would I have been if I never had known? Just some empty, careless self, never reaching below the surface of things, like so many everywhere. I can never be that way again, and it makes me glad in spite of how long the time has been and how unutterable the loneliness. I——"

"What are you talking about?" asked Alen rudely.

The woman rose and began packing up her work, Alen watching her the while.

"How I wish, Alen," said the woman sadly, "that I could find the words to make my meaning quite plain to you." She paused and looked at Alen thoughtfully. "Perhaps to-night, when we are sitting by the fire and you ask me, as you always do, to tell you a story, I can tell you then. I cannot do so now. For I do so want to tell you, Alen. I want to be the one to tell you of it first, to show you how only through this most wonderful thing in the world, God makes it possible for you to become a noble, splendid man, so that when you know of it yourself, you will look back and say, 'This is what she meant. This is what she was trying to tell me of that day up there on the mountain.' Then because what I have told you of will be the only good, pure, unselfish thing that you will ever find, no matter where you may go, you will be glad that I told you of it and, perhaps, made it possible for you to realise the happiness it means. For your life will be empty indeed, if you never do know."

"I don't understand," said Alen.

Then, as the woman did not reply, there was silence

as they made their way down into the valley once more.

That evening there was a fire on the rough stone hearth, for the nights were cool. How different were the three faces in the firelight. There was Llywelyn Therwith with his black eyes half closed and lips twitching as though he muttered to himself, and the woman with her broad, low forehead and the soft brown hair and eyes that looked beyond the fire into the precious world that always lies just there. Stretched on the floor, the firelight falling full upon him, lay Alen.

At last Llywelyn Therwith nodded and closed his eyes. In the quiet room there was no sound but the burning of the fire and the man's long, regular breathing. The woman spoke in a whisper.

"Alen," she said, "I have been thinking how to tell you ever since this afternoon. Because it is all so close to my heart and means so much to me, I don't know how to tell you. When I was a girl about as old as you are now, I found some verses in a book, and because I liked them, I learned them. I did not know then what they meant, but everything I want to tell you is in them. I have written them out on a bit of paper for you, and have put it in this little box so that you may keep it always safely if you only want to. Because you do not understand it to-day is why I am so anxious for you to keep it until the time that you do know just what the words mean. It is a little thing for me to ask, Alen, but I want you to learn the words, never to forget them, to be trying always to know what they mean, so that in the end

you can become a true man, all that a man is capable of being. You can be all of that if you really understand the full meaning of the words."

The woman held the box out to him in her hand. Alen Therwith laughed.

"How queer you are," he said. "How can they make me more of a man than if I did not know?" But he held out his hand for the box.

"You must let me read them to you first, Alen," she said. "Will you promise to keep the box and to learn the words and to try to understand them? Will you keep on trying always, Alen? I want you to promise."

"Why, yes, of course," he said, "if you want me to, only I cannot make anything out of what you say at all."

The woman smiled down at him lying there on the floor at her feet, holding the little box in his hand, examining it carelessly. There was something mysterious about the box itself, apparently, that appealed to him.

"Sometimes," she said, "I am not quite sure that I understand either. Then I banish every doubt I have, for I do know the full meaning of each word. And then," she went on more slowly, "I think no one has learned them at a greater cost than I, and so, perhaps, no one can know more clearly what they mean than I do."

She stooped and took the box from Alen's hand and opened it. Then she unfolded the paper it contained. Because she did not need to see, she folded it up again and put it back in its place, and closing

38 THE SONG OF THE PINES

her eyes, began to repeat the words. Alen listened, wondering.

“ The Song of the Pines of the Forest
Is that of the Waves of the Sea.
The Song of the World since there was Life,
The lonely Pine-trees sing to me,—
Love, Love, that endeth not,
That can not pass away,
Love, Love, forever Love,
Forever and a Day.

“ Touched with lost Happiness’ grey Twilight,
Shadows of sad Things that are dear,
The Pine-trees whisper a Melody,
Only our longing Hearts may hear,—
Love, Love, that endeth not,
That can not pass away,
Love, Love, forever Love,
Forever and a Day.

“ To everyone God sends a Day,
No matter what the rest may bring,
One happy Day when the Heart may know
The Love of which the Pine-trees sing,—
Love, Love, that endeth not,
That can not pass away,
Love, Love, forever Love,
Forever and a Day.”

CHAPTER VI

THE WORLD CLAIMS ALLEN

IN the year 1827, Allen Therwith reached the age of seventeen. It was now five years since that memorable day that the woman came to live at his father's house. Yet through all the time his mind had never kept pace with the growth of his body, for in stature and strength, Allen Therwith was a man.

Once only did the woman refer to that day on the mountain-side which led to her giving to Allen the verses and the little box. They were passing the rock and she stopped a moment just there where she stood on that other day.

"What did you think of me, Allen?" she asked. "Was it all very strange?"

Allen Therwith looked at her, and for the moment, quite seriously.

"Sometimes when I think about it," he replied, "I am almost afraid. I don't understand it at all. I don't understand what you meant."

The woman could see the doubts and misgivings gather in his mind. If he were to follow in his father's footsteps and dwell always in those Welsh mountains, it was as well for Allen Therwith that there were not to be too many years of this companionship. His mind was filled with questionings and the things the woman taught him were for the most

part but unfitting him to live contentedly in this place in which he had been born. It is possible that the woman herself would have admitted this, yet all that she had done for Alen had been done unselfishly. It requires courage, indeed, to dare to teach to another things that can only make him discontented with all he has been born to in life. Yet if the teaching brings new ideals and better ones, making possible for him a higher standard as the measure of his life, who shall say it was unwise to care enough for him to have tried to help him? In no other way can the good be passed from one to another, lifting each a little to a higher level. So the world is better with every new day; so each may rejoice over the good he can put into life, and the old question of what he can get out of it be at last forgotten with all the rest that is selfish.

Influences such as came to Alen Therwith bring with them measureless possibilities. Their ultimate effect the woman herself could not have foreseen through his awakening years. Nor can it be measured even when Alen's life is ended. There are some who find no trace of it in Alen himself. Others, seeing further, it may be, believe the happiness of some of those among whom he chanced to be was the greater because Alen Therwith played just the part he did, perhaps unconsciously or even quite against his will.

Just as two circles touch at but one place, so the lives of Alen Therwith and of this woman met but once and for a brief space of years. Whether he wanted it to be so or not, he was destined to be ever

different, better, in spite of all in which he failed. Yet had it been possible for the woman to follow him through the years to come, she could only have sorrowed over him, and despised him.

There came a day when the Welsh mountains could no longer be the horizon about Alen's world. Though they never spoke of it, both the woman and he knew it, knew that the day would soon come when Alen should leave his home. Lest what little measure of influence she had gained over him should be lost, the woman said little to Alen, working on as though unconscious of all the new hopes and ideas and the plans that were crowding into his newly-awakened mind. She was quite content. Only, when the long twilight came to the Highlands and she saw Alen looking upon it all with no thought of what the moment was, saw him driving the sheep up the valley in the gathering dusk without the least regret or sadness over all that was ending forever—then and not till then did the woman fear for Alen's self. Indeed, her warm, generous heart had no thought that when the time came for him to go it would be thus—that it still all meant nothing to Alen Therwith. The past years had had no difficulty in teaching her to love these mountains, to cling to it all. She dared not ask herself why Alen was utterly indifferent, why his only thought in leaving was eagerness to be gone.

Sometimes when they reached the gate, she made Alen stop and look back down the path which they had come. The tranquillity that was all about brought peace and a sense of security to her, telling

her of the One who through the long hours of the night would watch over even that lonely mountain home.

So on the last night, she and Alen stopped. For the moment she let herself imagine that his face softened as he watched the colours dying in the west. His eyes followed the lines of the mountains and then down the slopes to the pines and the rocky meadows and the stream, all black now, in the twilight.

"Alen," she said, "do you know what it would be if there was only one thing that I could tell you?"

It was because he was so preoccupied that he only replied, "No."

The woman was misled. She felt now that she had been unfair in believing that he did not care. Sometimes hearts that care are spared the hurt of knowing how unworthy the object of their thoughts may be. Because she thought Alen was to become the man she hoped him to be, the woman was content at that moment to do no more than to ask God that no harm should come to him. He had become almost her own son, yet she let him go with no words other than these.

"If there could only be one thing, Alen, I would say to you again the verses I told you that night by the fire. There is nothing else in the world so worthy, though the verses fail to express it all fully. If you can come to understand it, you will be blessed more than by all else besides. Until that time, put from you every unworthy thing, lest you become so soiled that you will never know all that you might have made of yourself. In every little thing you must

cling to the best that you find in you. Otherwise you will be unworthy and none will depend on you. If you ever fail in any duty that is yours, you will have unfitted yourself for what you might have been. It may be God will be willing that you shall have a full knowledge of what the verses mean—perhaps more than that. After you know what they mean, you may have the fulfilment of it through long, happy years. If there is to be no fulfilment, that will not matter to you, for it is the knowing that is the most satisfying, the most precious of all of it. You will not forget, Alen?”

Alen Therwith, partly because he must say something, and then, too, the earnestness in her manner made itself felt even upon him, looked at her in the frank, boyish way he sometimes had.

“I have the verses,” he said. “I will keep them and try to understand them, if you want me to. I will remember what you have said.”

Then he shut the gate and whistling to the dogs, went on up the path. The woman stood motionless, watching his retreating figure.

The next morning, Llywelyn Therwith felt there was no longer any reason why he should not tell this woman just the harm her teaching had done to Alen. In the darkness of the night, Alen Therwith had gone, and his father knew he would never see him again.

Of his conversation with the woman, all may be forgotten except this, that in it Llywelyn Therwith showed clearly that there was not one thought of sorrow at Alen’s going because of any affection he

44 THE SONG OF THE PINES

had for his son. It is because this was so that it was just as well that Alen stole away as he did, without stopping to bid his father good-bye, for it is a hard thing to have to learn that those who, in the natural order of things, should love us, do not hold us in their affection.

BOOK SECOND

The tale that is writ by evil ways,
Burned in the heart with a crimson flame,
Tells of the fate of a life of shame—
“Death is the end of all evil days.”

CHAPTER I

THE WANDERER

ON the deck of a ship a group of sailors stood watching the land they were fast approaching, low land that rose just above the level of the sea. If we scanned their faces, there is one among them whom we would recognise. Older by nearly five years, older by many, many years in the experience the five had brought him, we would find again Alen Therewith, the shepherd boy of the mountains, grown to manhood.

Strong of frame, erect, self-reliant, his face had gained the shrewd, keen expression that comes from protecting one's self from the hard knocks of the world. More than this, the face was not one that was reassuring. Determination, mingled with much that would prevent its being used to achieve the good, was written there unmistakably and indelibly. Then there were the inevitable marks of a coarse, rough life among men, and women, too, in whom there was ever an absence of virtue. For many days, Alen had had no companions other than these followers of the sea. Again, he had made his way aimlessly through the streets of London, or wandered alone along the Dutch canals, or, on the sea at night had become a solitary watcher, finding in the stars and the swaying yards and the sound of the wind in the rigging, noth-

ing to keep him company. Because of all this, it was remarkable that the years had not been too hard, and so taken from Alen Therwith all his confidence in himself, his eagerness and ambition, leaving behind only the old, overwhelming selfishness.

The ship, with her sails still drawing in the breeze that was dying with the setting of the sun, entered the mouth of a broad river. One of the other sailors pointed out to Alen the muddy water of the river where it met and mingled with the green, clean water of the sea. As one in authority because of his wider knowledge, the sailor spoke to Alen and the others and pointed to the sea at the ship's side, while they gazed on in wonderment.

"It's the River Plate, boys," he said.

The ship moved more sluggishly, for the wind was softer and everywhere it was so still that there could be heard the soft hush of the water under the bow and the creaking of the spars. Over the low-lying plains, scarcely high enough to keep the ocean back, the sun set. There was but a broad band of red left across the west. Then even that faded, and the stars of the southern sky showed themselves as the ship dropped anchor.

All hands asked for shore leave that night. The few who got it climbed into the long boat, swearing joyfully at each other, eager for their freedom. May God forgive them for all that they did that night, for all that men do when youth and strength are still upon them, yet without the knowledge or desire to use these things as they should. For them, it was but

a bit of skylarking and a drink or two, after many, many a long, weary mile at sea, sometimes through the heat of the tropical sun, sometimes through the storm at night.

Alen Therwith, who, in spite of what those years of hardship had brought him, was not then quite as the rest of them, found even more zest in this enterprise than they. This landing on a strange shore was not without its welcome flavour of adventure to him.

The lonely beach, the queer, crooked, dirty streets, the straggling houses, the lights of the tavern, the sound of boisterous men, a motley of queer faces, English, Dutch and Spanish, brought together in this little South American town from the ends of the earth, attracted him by reason of their very repulsiveness.

As the night advanced, there was none who called more boisterously for this or that than Alen Therwith, and none who drank more deeply of the strange, red wine that should have been made in Spain. So the hours wore away, the sounds in the tavern grew fainter and fainter and, at last, ceased. The grey dawn, stealing in at the open door, touched the figure of Alen Therwith, lying with his head on his arms upon a table, asleep. Of his companions there was none remaining, except one who likewise slept, but he lay on the floor. The air of the room was still heavy and foul.

The sun was high when mine host entered the low-ceilinged room and, seizing Alen roughly by the shoulders, lifted him bodily and threw him out through the door. Alen, waking under the rough

50 THE SONG OF THE PINES

treatment, tried for the moment to resist, and then, too dazed and unsteady to know, stumbled and fell and lay asleep again in the dirt of the street.

It was mid-day when at last Alen Therwith awoke and, gathering himself together, stood for a moment looking at the tavern door, while much that had occurred the night before came struggling back into his mind. Then he turned and walked slowly down the street toward the bank of the river, with a lurch and a roll that was partly of the sea. At the lower end of the street he paused and looked out over the water. There was the ship with all sails set, slipping rapidly out from the land. When he turned away at last, she was but a white speck on the edge of the sea.

CHAPTER II

THE WORTH OF A MAN'S WORD

It was June in the year 1881. A month had passed since the ship sailed away, leaving Alen behind. Once again he was a shepherd, but now the sheep were heavy and lazy, where before they had been the little sturdy ones of Wales. Instead of the mountains, there was all about only the grassy pampas stretching away like the waves of the sea, as far as the eye could reach. When night came and the sun set in this land sea, there was no hearth fire before which a boy might lie, listening to stories of an unknown world. There was but a lonely road across the plains over which Alen trudged toward the scattered lights of the town, struggling as best they might against the blackness of the night.

In from the sea blew the soft night wind, laden with the mystery of the place from whence it came. It touched Alen's brown cheek as softly as a caress. So God sent him when he was all alone, a token to tell him His greatest secret, stealing in upon Alen Therwith's senses, whispering to him a wordless message. He, confident and unheeding, walked along the road night after night, the desertedness of all about him serving only to deepen his bitterness and the wilfulness of his desire to gratify himself in evil ways.

It was not strange that he sought companionship

and light and life, after the long day on the unending plain. Such life and light! It was a new world, a world so far removed from the vigorous blood and stern ways of his boyhood as to be almost an unreality. It was as if part of Spain had been moved westward across the salt sea and set down again where the plains and the sea met. With it, Old World men and women brought their Old World standards. They boasted of Spanish conquest and the valour of the men of Castile and Aragon. In their veins there still flowed the hot, red blood that the Moors left behind them when at last they were driven back again across the Midland Sea.

Without shame, Alen Therwith became one of these men, aye, and more, almost leader among them, for it was he who laughed the loudest, drank the most and danced the longest to the strange music of this Old World people. Yet when the mood was upon him, he sat silent and alone in a corner of the room, watching the others with heavy eyes. Then the men knew it was best to leave him alone.

It was at such a time that something of the old Alen, the boy of the mountains, came again to him at the sound of this music, came unbidden and unwelcome, because pain still lay in the thought of all that had once been possible. So the strength struggled with the weakness, so the spark of conscience found it hard to die. Yet, at last, it too, was gone, blotted out by all the evil that in the end took full possession of Alen Therwith.

Thus the mad pulse of the music stirred the man, drove out into the world of lost selves the spirit of

Alen Therwith. The blood rose within him till it seemed as though he would choke, till the heated room with its miserable flaring lamps swam before his vision, till the dancing figures were blurred and dim.

Sometimes music rouses the slumbering fire that smoulders and glows in the days of youth till it bursts into the flame that is the baser side of human nature. So Alen Therwith, the shepherd boy, with this new fire struggling within him, was roused at last by the music of Spain, till the pent-up passion of a man swept through his whole self like strong wine, exhilarating, intoxicating, relentless.

There is nothing new in all of this. It is but a strong nature come for the first time to be among men and women who are careless of themselves, careless of the future, born only to play and laugh and cry for a while.

The strong man stands and contemplates these men and women among whom virtue has been an unknown word since they were old enough to know what it meant, had they cared to learn. For a moment he sees it all, weighs it all—this heedless life that is only for a day, then——

Among them all there was a girl more to be desired than the rest. For this reason, perhaps, it was with her that Alen must needs make his advances. His ill-success caused the fire of his baser self that had been started by the music, to burn the brighter.

In truth, they were not ill-matched, those two, strong, splendid specimens, each of them, embodying physically almost the ideal.

Once and but once did the Alen that might have been speak to the girl. She found among his belongings a little box. The girl unfolded the bit of paper it contained, written all over in a woman's hand. She asked Alen what it was.

"It's poetry," he said indifferently. "You wouldn't understand it."

The girl turned the bit of paper over carefully.

"Do you?" she asked.

Then, as he did not answer,

"Why do you keep it?"

Alen Therwith took the paper from the girl's hand and, putting it back in the little box, closed the lid with a snap.

"I keep it for luck," he said with a laugh. "The writing is about the greatest thing in the world, and that must be luck, mustn't it?"

The girl held out her hand.

"Give me the paper," she demanded. "It'll bring me luck, too. I want your luck, and besides, the box is pretty."

"I will," said Alen, "only you mustn't be telling people where you got it, for the box cost money and the writing is in a foreign tongue. If anyone says I must have given the box to you, you'd better be denying it."

"You're the one that'll be denying you gave me the box," replied the girl.

"Not I," said Alen.

The girl took the box. Then she looked at Alen proudly.

"Do you mean it?" she said.

"My word upon it," said Alen Therwith. "So long as I live, I'll not be denying that I gave you the box and the bit of paper and my luck with them."

But the girl doubted.

"What is a man's word worth?" she said.

CHAPTER III

EVIL DAYS

EVEN in that out-of-the-way part of the world things got strangely tangled. Because of law there was none save the old law that might makes right, there was nothing of gentleness or conscience.

The time soon came when Alen Therwith found that even there things would not always go to his liking. There came a scene that was filled with loud talking and many gestures and strange oaths, while the rest crowded about and watched the three who were acting it, the girl and her brother and Alen Therwith. The end of it all was that because he must, Alen fetched the priest that the Church of Rome had sent to even this little South American town.

Then came many days in a little house out on the plains where Alen and the girl had made their home. Each day as it went left the antipathy that had sprung up between them stronger, until each felt the unbearableness of the tie that had been forced upon them for the sake of the girl's name. Each chafed more and more under its restrictions and under the isolation that it put upon them. The man and the girl both longed to live again the old days in the town.

After a time, the tiny house held three, for a

lusty baby that was a boy had come, a child who was as like his father as could be, except that his hair was red.

At last, just as winter was coming, the three went back to the town, to the old haunts that the man and the girl found it so hard to get on without. Slowly Alen Therwith sank back to his old companions, growing more bitter, more morose as time went on. Now the quarrels between husband and wife were fiercer and more frequent, and at night, Alen's return became later and later and his step more uncertain, as he sought his door. Yet the girl wished that he would never come. Through it all the little one slept in quiet, giving no heed to the violence and strife his father and mother brought so close to him.

One night there was a wild wind sweeping in from the sea. The clouds scarcely rose above the sea itself or the low plains, driven on in fantastic, ever-changing shapes before the fury of the storm. Perhaps it is still true that no night can be wild enough, stormy enough, black enough, to hide forever all the evil deeds that may be done under cover of the darkness. So, perhaps, after many years, all that was done that night, still seeking relentlessly, shall find the guilty one at last.

In the darkness of the street of the town, a solitary figure strolled along and stopped and listened, and went on again. At last he reached the door of the house of Alen Therwith—listened and looked this way and that, and then, because all was safe in the blackness of the night, knelt for a moment by the door itself. Then the figure became but a blacker shadow

in the darkness, and from the door came a little column of smoke, and then fire that licked its way hungrily over the house so quickly that not one soul within could escape. The great wind caught it up and hurried it on from that house to the next, and the next. Soon there were figures running hither and thither, and cries and shouts above the crackling of the flames. The little house where it started was but glowing embers now, with a bit of wall from which the smoke still rose standing amid the ruins.

Out on the plains, his face still touched by the glow of the fire coming to him through the night, was the man who had done this thing. Something very like a smile was on his face as he watched the flames leap higher and higher. At last he turned and plunged off across the plains, anywhere, so long as it was away. But another figure, following the man through it all, watched him from the security of the darkness. The girl with the child in her arms went on after him down the street, till at last he was lost in the open plain. Then she stood motionless, peering through the darkness after him.

The child in her arms stirred and wakened. Then he fell asleep again. Clapsed tight in his fingers was a little box that was his only toy.

BOOK THIRD

**Memories of long-gone days—
Days of sunshine and of rain
Forgotten—stir and waken,
And Old Times come back again.**

PROLOGUE

A LIFE in which the current of events flows tranquilly is not of necessity without deep waters that, when stirred, rouse the real self to a nobility quite impossible in another more adventurous or turbulent. Often I have been glad to turn to this quieter part of our story, that I might feel the strong, deep under-current in the hearts of some of its men and women.

All that has gone before—the coarse life, unrestrained, vigorous—was but the seeking of strong men after the unworthy. Now we are come to quiet days among people who strive to achieve only the things which are good. When they fail, they find a sorrow in their fault, and with it the courage to try again. Yet sometimes, even here, the peacefulness must be torn asunder by the violence of human passion.

Long, long ago, when Holland sent her sons and daughters across the sea, it was but natural that they should call their new home after the old. Yet even in this western wilderness, some of the settlers of New Amsterdam sought still quieter places. To this day among the green hills and valleys of Staten Island, resisting as stoutly as of yore the stress and storm of passing years, we still find those early Dutch homes. Generations have come and gone, yet there has been no thought of change, nor desire for new scenes. Industrious, virtuous, they were content

to live their lives quietly, happily, while their children grew to a better manhood and womanhood than ever the Old World knew. So they worshipped their God, loved their homes and, when their time had come, slept at last in peace.

In these later days, it is as well, perhaps, that few of us know these places, though they are so close at our door. Time, while moving at a slower pace, has even there changed the face of the land. Only in some retired spot under the broad blue sky, with the sunshine all about, does there still linger a faint reflection of the forgotten glory of the olden time. There is no one now to care for these things or to cherish them. Thus the charm and beauty of Staten Island itself grows less and less distinct with each passing year, save to the few, perhaps, to whom God has given the power to look back into other days, to see things again as once they were. These few, these blessed few, find the past real, for they see with eyes that understand. As for the rest, in the end they will miss the truth that in lives before theirs the fire of hope and ambition has burned no less strongly than in their own, and other hearts have known the same unending struggle of good and evil, the same longings, the same loneliness, the same love.

You must come with me for a while, that you may know these other days. I want you to see the hills and the level country and the sea, touched, perhaps, with kindlier colours, as our affection often leads us to portray a scene we love. None shall share with us our delight; none shall know that the phantoms our imaginations will find are kin to our own most

precious memories. But unlike our dreams, they were once real.

As in some long hidden book upon which the dust has gathered since the days these things were realities, we find them all—Red Lane, the church, the Valley of the Iron Hill, the Iron Hill itself, like names of some forgotten land. To-night as I write, the moonlight lies as bright as day on all that once was this. Perhaps, to-night, the spirit of the olden time steals over this once again, bringing to the straggling line of trees that still mark Red Lane their former beauty and the happiness that once they knew. The Valley of the Iron Hill and the church and the little brook lie sleeping as do those, there in the churchyard, who knew it as it was, and nothing but the shadows that the moonlight makes, marks the passing of the time. Thus it will be as long as this old world of ours is destined to go on, and thus it will be that after a little while is all forgotten. But the good and evil must continue long after those whose deeds they were have gone on into the great unknown.

Do not think that I am following but the ghosts of long ago. Yet sometimes the spirits of the unseen world are almost whispering to me. They may still haunt Red Lane itself, and the three great elms that through the years have marked the land's end may still shelter those who loved them in their prime. Sometimes as I look, the meadows themselves are fairer in the sunlight for the thought that comes to me down through the years from those who looked, once upon a time, from the hills across these very meadows to the sea, and looking, felt rise within them

the unspeakable love for the beautiful world God has given us. Nor was there any fairer part than that lying out before them. Because it was here their sorrow and their happiness came to them, because here they found long, lonely years of work and trial, of bitterness, of burden that was almost more than could be borne—it is all the fairer to me, for it means that in the end the happiness was the greater.

I would not picture to you, even if I could, lives in which there appears to have been only happiness, for I take it if any such there be, they are selfish merely, and never know the breadth and depth of life, or the tenderness and strength of the human heart. Only to those who have mingled tears with laughter does the book of life lie open. So it was in those earlier times. So it is to-day—and the loneliness and sorrow are but the stepping-stones by which the heart at last finds itself.

As one loves to linger with old friends in pleasant places, so I find comfort in being with those who dwell only in the pages of this book. Again I see Alen Therwith as on that first afternoon, standing in the shadow of the trees at the foot of Red Lane, looking across the meadows at the solid figure of Peter Brevoort with his queer hat and the Dutch pipe, walking toward him. Then in the long winter evenings, I see the two brothers in the firelight in the old Dutch kitchen, with Dorothea beside them. As the years pass, I stand again, in imagination, outside the church in the darkness and listen to the singing. The light streams out into the night through the open door. Looking in, I can see Stephen Lane

standing in his place as of old, with the lamplight falling full upon his face, serious, quiet and strong.

Then another night comes and the great trees along Red Lane toss their branches against the blackness of the sky. In that strange light that the breakers make at night, two forms toss about locked in each other's arms in a grasp that death itself does not break. There is Stephen again, with his face pale and determined, his clothes dripping with the salt spray of the sea, as he peers out into the night.

Again all is changed. It is late afternoon with the golden light still across the hill-tops, and the sitting-room in the great white house still glows with its reflection. Dorothea is singing softly there. Something that rises from her heart gives her voice a sweeter, tenderer tone. Stephen Lane, entering unnoticed, stands in the gathering twilight and listens. Everywhere is peace and love, and the sound of a dear voice singing:

"The Song of the Pines of the Forest
Is that of the Waves of the Sea."

But now—now all this is gone, the worthy and the unworthy alike. When it is Spring the violets still grow beneath the trees in the bit that remains of Red Lane, and the birds sing in their happiness. The warm rain falling softly, washes the apple blossoms from the trees as it did on that other day, long ago, upon which Stephen Lane first came to the church at the foot of the Iron Hill. There are but two of the three great elms still standing, and of these, one is dead and the other can boast of nothing but a great

jagged scar that marks the passing of some summer storm. It will not be long before even these are gone. So it is with all in life that from its nature is not immortal. Yet the seasons themselves come and go just as in those other days. On winter nights the level land still lies asleep beneath its mantle of snow and a light that might have been in Stephen's study makes its way unfalteringly out through the darkness. When the day is done, the golden band still lies across the western sky, the deeper for the dark outlines of the hills against it, and when the wind stirs the tops of the pine-trees, their song is the same as that to which Stephen and Dorothea listened long ago.

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH ALLEN THERWITH FINDS A NEW HOME

ALL day a ship lay at anchor in the Bay, waiting for wind to come to carry it up through the Narrows to the city. The slow ground swell rolled in from the sea till it met the current of the Raritan, making the yards chafe slowly back and forth with the motion of the ship. From her deck, Allen Therwith watched the land and chafed too, at his confinement. In some way through the long weeks, the sea had given back to him the physical manhood that before had tottered and almost fallen. Again he was strong and confident, a man determined to achieve success, yet never caring whether or not the means he used were worthy. There had come to him as well the power to command as a matter of right, as one man is by nature made master over others. It was apparent in his tone as he hailed a fisherman's boat that was passing, and it showed, too, in his stride an hour later, as he landed on the beach and made his way toward three great elms, marking the beginning of a long line of trees leading back across the meadows to the hills.

Yet it was with the unseeing eyes of the shepherd boy of old that the glory of the scene about him was unperceived by Allen. Nor was the day ever to come when it meant more to him than the mere setting

necessary for his life, and the gratification of its selfishness.

Curiosity caused him to stop, where the lane that followed the line of trees turned slightly to the east after leaving the beach, to watch a figure approaching across the open ground. Well indeed, might he pause in wonderment at the sight of so queer an individual. From the crown of his black hat to the shining buckles of his shoes he was as one stepped from some scene of Holland. The very atmosphere of the place, the Dutch self-satisfaction and complacency clung to him, and had they not been mingled with an evident quick temper, would have made him a most comfortable person indeed. As he drew near 'Alen, he stopped and removing his long-stemmed pipe from his lips, blew a whiff of smoke into the air. When he spoke, it was slowly, after the manner of a man given to ponder deeply on all things and to speak only of matters of weight.

"Stranger," he said, "you are a trespasser."

Slowly he swept the horizon with his arm, indicating his ownership of all about them.

In after years, he came to know that the Welsh spirit when roused, was even more determined than his own. It was characteristic, perhaps, of all their dealings, that this, their first meeting, would, had they let it, have shown each to the other so plainly.

"If I am a trespasser," said Alen, mimicking, though perhaps unconsciously, the measured speech of the other, "it is the first good use to which you have put the land these many years. And you a Dutchman, too, from the ground up. Why in your

own country, this bit of land would support fifty men such as you."

The vehemence in Alen's tone caused the man to step back and his jaw fell as he stared at Alen Therwith in wonderment. Lest the younger man should observe that he was disconcerted, he raised his pipe and looked at it slowly and critically, turning it this way and that. Then he spoke again to Alen, who had started to move away.

"Hold on," he said in a more conciliatory tone, "what do you mean?"

"Have you ever been in Holland?" asked Alen sharply.

"Can you ask me that?"

In spite of himself, Alen smiled.

"How comes it, then," said Alen, "that a man like you does not know the use of a ditch?"

"The use of a ditch?" said the other slowly.

"Yes, of course," said Alen. He was beginning to grow impatient. "What have the Dutch done in their own country but drive back the sea and dry the land by draining it with their ditches, so that where once was sea is now a garden? For all I know, you have been looking at these meadows going to waste with no thought in your stupid head that a little work would make you the richest man hereabouts."

"Say that again," said the older man, slowly.

"I must be going along," said Alen. "I have yet to find a place for the night."

But his companion was insistent.

"I'll lodge you," said he, "and keep you as long as you want, only I must talk with you."

He laid his hand on Alen's arm detainingly.

"I must talk with you," he said again.

So Alen unwillingly suited his pace to the slower one of his companion.

Peter Brevoort, for such was the other's name, was in a more talkative mood even than usual that afternoon. He was eager to tell his new-found friend the whole history of himself and neighbours. Alen was content to listen, for he felt that in some way this information might not be amiss in the days to come. Then too, something like caution made him glad to get the other's confidence, if he had to give none in return. Besides, there was much of the New World and of the great city so near by that Alen was glad to learn, and none could have been more eager than Peter Brevoort to show his complete familiarity with it all.

"It should never have been called New York," said Peter Brevoort. "The old name, the name my countrymen gave it is the one it should have held. Englishmen change everything."

Alen did not reply.

"It should have been New Amsterdam," Peter Brevoort repeated, "New Amsterdam, I say, so that the old names could still be found in this part of the world."

Alen Therwith looked at his companion more understandingly. A possible explanation of the queer figure and the queerer costume was now apparent. But Alen was disgusted with it all. Indeed, there was nothing in his nature to make him patient with such peculiarities.

"You are altogether wrong," he said. "It's more than foolish to try to prevent these changes. It makes you lose what should be yours. It makes you lose money by not keeping up with them."

"Lose money," said Peter Brevoort. "How is that?"

Alen Therwith pointed again to the land about them.

"How many dollars have you taken from these meadows since you lived here?" he asked.

Peter Brevoort shook his head.

"Not a dollar, but there has always been enough to live on from the rest of it."

"But, man," cried Alen, "there should have been more, much more than that. You might have been rich, richer than you ever hope to be."

They were walking side by side now, up the lane together. It was dark when they reached the foot of the hill, but the white house with its Dutch roof and the little windows, with its great kitchen on the east end, from which the lamplight streamed, was plainly marked against the dark of the trees. The air was still and against the sky a faint column of blue smoke rose from the kitchen chimney, straight up into the gathering night. The sense of home, the quiet of the evening was everywhere. Even Alen Therwith felt something of its touch. But it was all lost on his companion.

"We must talk it over," he kept muttering to himself. "It's a good idea. A ditch. A ditch. Why did I never think of it?"

Then he led Alen Therwith into the house.

CHAPTER II

A TIME OF PLENTY.

ONLY on special occasions and after much urging, could Mrs. Brevoort and Dorothea persuade Peter Brevoort to eat his evening meal elsewhere than in the kitchen of the white house. With him, everything in life proceeded on the theory that anything that had been good enough for his forefathers in the old days in Holland, gained a sanctity thereby that made it a sacrilege to so much as suggest a change. This idea controlled his every thought and action to the exclusion of all others. It was no wonder then, that both Dorothea Brevoort and her mother suffered more than they would confess from this eccentricity. Because they were wise, they saw the folly of trying to change the master of the house. They merely tried as far as was within their power to hide his peculiarities and spare him in a measure from the ridicule and misunderstanding of their neighbours.

In one respect at least, Peter Brevoort's Dutch ways were not without their compensation. Perhaps nowhere in America was there another household more completely and perfectly patterned after the homes of Holland than was this. From the house itself down to the smallest article of furniture, from the shining window panes to the scrupulous cleanliness of the bare wooden floors, it was all essentially

Dutch. Nevertheless, this spotlessness could not be achieved without work, hard work, too, that made Dorothea's face glow with the quick flow of her blood. Her mother looking at her, beamed with pride, and in truth even a mother's pride was justified here, for one would have had to look far, indeed, to find the equal of Dorothea Brevoort, even in her younger years, as on that first day when Alen Therwith came to her father's house.

That night after the meal was cleared away, the two women withdrew, leaving the men still seated about the supper table. Peter Brevoort sat smoking his Dutch pipe, his hat on his head again, for he never seemed quite content unless he was wearing it. His brother Jacob was smoking, too, and Alen Therwith, his black eyes searching the faces of his companions eagerly, explaining again in his strong, confident manner his plans and all they were certain to achieve.

While Alen was still talking, Dorothea slipped into the room again and stood for a moment behind Jacob Brevoort.

"Uncle," she whispered, "you won't forget that I promised Mary to stop at her house to-night?"

Because none could see, Jacob Brevoort let his arm slip down behind his chair till it rested about Dorothea's waist, and the girl, at his touch, put her own hand, soft in spite of all its work, soft and warm, in her uncle's broad, rough palm. These two, at least, of all this household, knew and understood each other.

"I will not forget, Dorothea," said Jacob Brevoort.

Alen Therwith, the wanderer, the rough man of

the sea, who had once been the shepherd boy, looked at the quiet picture before him on that first night on Staten Island, and felt how empty all his days had been. For the moment he was subdued, almost softened at this glimpse of a home such as he had never known. Alen looked from the one to the other of these men, and noted their strong faces and strong characteristics, in spite of their having spent all their days thus quietly. Then Alen's eyes followed the figure of Dorothea Brevoort as she and her uncle went out together. A slender figure still in its girlhood; a face in which the freshness of youth was already marked with the dignity and tenderness of the woman; eyes that were blue and in them a softness that led one down to Dorothea's heart, the wonderful, unexplored heart, unknown as yet even to itself; hair that crowned her like a golden coronet—such was Dorothea. The simple gown, the poise, the daintiness that made her what she was, told Alen Therwith that it was this woman he had searched for in vain, and he blessed the lucky chance that brought him to the white house and to her, at last.

Although Alen was not conscious of it, all that was coarse in his own nature stirred at the sight of Dorothea's refinement and her freshness and charm and youth, and because her purity was in such contrast to his own life, it made her but the more desirable to him. Thus it is that the evil in men and women always craves to possess for its own gratification the virtue it finds in one who is pure. Alen Therwith felt all of this with the full vigour of his strong nature, yet when Dorothea was gone, he only turned to Peter

Brevoort with an odd smile upon his lips that the latter did not see.

After this, there were many days of activity down on the level land. For hours at a time the solid figure of Peter Brevoort could be seen standing, watching the men at work. Alen Therwith was there too, giving orders to all in the tone of a man who knows thoroughly what he is about. Slowly across the marshy meadow a ditch was dug; then some hundred yards distant another, and still another, and then one across them all and connecting them. The neighbourhood was agog with excitement and gossip at the mystery. Even Mrs. Brevoort and Dorothea received calls from neighbours, who sometimes said good-bye with the burning question unasked, and sometimes they were less polite. When they were gone, Dorothea and her mother smiled together over these new civilities.

As for Peter Brevoort, the mysterious work brought to him a self-importance and a realisation of it that made him more arrogant than ever. Once when his old neighbour Thomas Witte stopped to watch the work, Peter Brevoort only shook his head slowly from side to side in reply to his questions, and looked more mysterious than ever. It will never do to tell them yet, he thought to himself, for who has ever dreamed that these acres could be of use, could be made to be aught else than waste land, wet for the most part, shunned alike by man and beast, except indeed, for the little "islands" where, if the season be dry, a crop of hay was sometimes harvested?

Through the days Alen Therwith worked like one

possessed. No need for Peter Brevoort to urge him on. No need to urge the men, either, for Alen attended to that thoroughly. So the long ditches grew and the moisture drained from the land between and filled them with deep black water, and lo, the land itself became of a sudden dry and firm and good.

In a measure the change that came to the land found its counterpart in the man who wrought it. When the day's work was done, two figures, as on that first afternoon, made their way under the shadows of the great trees along Red Lane up to the house. The short figure of Peter Brevoort was in strong contrast to that of his companion. Alen Therwith, in his rough working clothes, with his dark hair curled tightly about his forehead, with eyes that showed a clear mind behind them and a steady hand, was a very different man from the Alen who once listened to the music in the tavern in far-off South America.

A queer friendship sprang up between these two men, if, indeed, it could properly be called by so kindly a name. It was almost admiration that Peter Brevoort felt for Alen. The work that the younger man did made this possible, for nothing like affection could exist between them. It was only that the Dutch imagination was strong enough to show Peter Brevoort, now that the way had been pointed out to him, where untold wealth was to be found. Peter Brevoort knew well how his reputation for astuteness had grown until it spread over the whole of Staten Island, and men came from far and near to see his waving fields of corn and grain that had taken the

place of the deserted marshes because the hand of this younger man had touched it as with magic, making the rich earth which had lain dormant through the years, yield its bountiful harvests.

Alen Therwith was shrewd enough to see Peter's weak point. After all, the greed of gain lies very close to the surface. Yet Alen was always careful that it should appear to Peter Brevoort that the ideas were all Peter's own. Thus the older man's self-satisfaction grew with the passing of each day. So the desire for greater and greater wealth ever increased till Peter Brevoort was wholly absorbed in it, till he was willing to sacrifice everything to acquire it.

As far as Alen Therwith was concerned, he only saw in the older man a means to an end, a person necessary to the ultimate gratification of Alen's ambition, the end he proposed to attain. No longer a wanderer, Alen found himself rapidly becoming a power in a small way in the community. He saw men stand aside and whisper as he passed. He knew that he was pointed out as the man who had come from over the sea and who had been shrewd enough to find the way to transform the very face of the land. Alen Therwith was sufficiently keen to look beyond the present. He saw the day when Peter Brevoort would no longer be there. It was as against that day that Alen worked and planned, for none knew better than he that no one could take his place, and in the end he should possess it all, the land, the white house on the Iron Hill, Dorothea. The ultimate object of possessing Dorothea Brevoort, which began at the very first and grew with each passing day, had now absorbed

the whole man, until Alen Therwith thought of nothing and did nothing that was not in some measure related to its final accomplishment. Even then it gave to Alen an infinite patience to scheme and wait and watch, lest some too hasty move spoil his opportunity. No time was too long if, by waiting and by caution, his success would be assured.

There was one morning when Dorothea Brevoort brought into the great kitchen of the white house, two flowers. One of these she handed to her father and the other to her uncle. The former tossed his on the floor, irritably.

"That's all you're good for," he said. "I am thankful that at last there is a young man in the house to be to me what you should have been."

He looked at Alen approvingly. Dorothea tried to smile.

"Yet there are some things," she said, "that even he is not able to be to you. But I am glad that you have him, for he will help you with your work, will he not?"

"It's a son I want," he said, "a son that can some day take his father's place and preserve his father's name and pay in work for all that I would have done in bringing him up and making a man of him. Instead of all that, I have only a worthless girl who spends her time in doing nothing better than picking flowers. Get out of my sight," he added roughly, "I have work to do to-day, and so has Alen."

Without a word, Dorothea turned away. The two who listened, Jacob Brevoort and Alen Therwith, turned away too. There was food for thought for all

of them that morning. Alen Therwith never forgot the incident, and he shrewdly sought to turn this, as everything, to his own advantage. As for Jacob Brevoort, through the long day his heart was heavy because of what Dorothea had been called upon to bear. He wanted to go back again to the white house on the Iron Hill, to tell her that he was there to shield her, help her, if he could. Yet he knew that it was kinder not to refer to it, that it would be easier for Dorothea if he were never to speak of it. So he worked on as a man should, hoping, praying, who shall say? For there is nothing harder than to be forced to stand silently by working at other things while someone who is dear is going along a hard way alone.

That night in the twilight, before the men returned from the lowland, a graceful figure stole quietly down the stairs, along the hall and into the great kitchen. Then slender fingers were busy filling the bowl of an old pipe that was made beyond the sea, and the tobacco pouch was laid on the mantel close by the well-filled pipe, and the chair that was Dorothea's father's was drawn near to the fire on the hearth. Then for a moment, she lingered while her hand stole across the back of the wooden chair, as though in some caress that was uncertain of its reception. Then she was gone as silently as she had come.

So the years rolled around till five harvests had come and gone. Staten Island was filled with the quiet that comes when the land rests after the long summer season. Never had a kind Providence

smiled more generously on their efforts. The great barns were filled to overflowing, despite all that had been sold in the markets in the city, or round about Staten Island.

It was night. Again there were gathered in the great kitchen Peter Brevoort and his brother and Alen Therwith. By some queer trick, Alen had laid aside with his working clothes much of his roughness. He sat by the broad table at his evening meal with the air of a prosperous, successful man, pleased alike with the world and with himself. Well might he be, for that night, at the age of thirty-seven, Alen Therwith had developed all the characteristics that make a man a leader in self-seeking, the unscrupulousness, the confident bearing, the conceit that shields one from all hurt to one's self.

That night the three men turned their minds to new plans for the year to come, so that by their foresight, another season should bring even greater plenty to the white house. Yet the change in circumstances made none in Peter Brevoort, for with the frugality of his ancestors he had kept tight hold of the purse strings, in spite of all the prosperity that Alen had brought to him. Everything about the white house went on as before, for the habits of years are not to be easily broken. Peter Brevoort still scolded as incessantly, found fault as unendingly as of old, and Mrs. Brevoort bore it all as patiently as ever, while Jacob, in his kindly, quiet way, tried to shield her from the sharp edge of his brother's tongue. Yet again and again his eyes roamed about the table, till they found Dorothea. At the sight of her sweet

young face, Jacob Brevoort's own face grew even more kindly than before, though his expression was not unmixed with anxiety, lest some hidden peril be hovering over Dorothea. But this faded quickly when the girl looked at him. Could it be that he feared for the happiness of Dorothea, now that womanhood had come to her? Gentle, tender Dorothea, still gowned as simply as on that first day we came to know her, but giving, perhaps, a better promise, if that were possible, of the wonderful Dorothea that was to be.

CHAPTER III

THE GIRL WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN A BOY

ONE day at dusk Jacob Brevoort, coming into the kitchen of the white house, found a tired little woman sitting in the low rocker beside the hearth. Because no one was looking, Mrs. Brevoort's face lost its cheerful expression for once, at least. Indeed, at that moment, all the weariness she had borne uncomplainingly came upon her and bowed her beneath its weight, making her sad and old of a sudden.

All this and more too, Jacob Brevoort noted, as he entered the room. The stride he took toward her, had she observed it, betokened a thousand things. When he spoke, Jacob Brevoort's voice had the same tone of tenderness that it always had when he spoke to Dorothea. Now it was Dorothea's mother who glanced up at him quickly, much as Dorothea herself would have done.

"You are tired," he said gently, "or something has gone wrong?"

His tone swept away all the self-control that kept her silent through the years. Her husband's harshness toward Dorothea, Mrs. Brevoort had borne as one bears a secret burden, that not even her husband's brother should know more of it than was absolutely unavoidable that he should. Yet at the sympathy and understanding in Jacob Brevoort's voice as he

asked this simple question, the effort of all the years to keep this sorrow secret was cast aside. But even now it was not for herself she spoke at last, but for Dorothea.

"Oh, Jacob," she said, "often Peter is so stern and severe that it seems as if he had no affection at all for Dorothea. I know how great his disappointment was because Dorothea was not a boy, yet from the very first, he has never tried to hide it, but has made it grow stronger all the time, till he resents her very presence. The hardest part is that it hurts Dorothea so."

"Yes," said Jacob Brevoort, "that is the hardest part. It has all been so wrong from the very beginning, so unjust and cruel. I have watched Dorothea from the day she was born as no one else has, except you. Even when she was a slip of a child, I have seen her almost broken-hearted because of Peter's harshness to her when she showed him her affection for him. Often I would have spoken to him, but I feared that to do so would only turn Peter against Dorothea more strongly than ever."

"I am sure it would have, Jacob," said Mrs. Brevoort. "Peter is just that unreasonable. Yet if it had not been for you, Jacob, Dorothea would have become a silent, neglected child, for her father's unkindness made it hard for her to come even to me to be loved. She always felt that you understood her, and she clings to you and loves you as she does no one else. Often I have marvelled at her courage and the strength she finds to hide her sorrow, but I know just how it hurts her."

Yet in truth, even her mother never knew what the hurt was, for Dorothea hid it as she hid nothing else in all her life, save one thing that the years to come brought her. As far back as she could remember, her heart had been so bruised and numbed by her father's uniform harshness as to deprive her of every childish joy. Yet with it came the strength to keep the suffering secret, to bear it all in silence. In spite of it, Dorothea's heart went on loving her father as a daughter should. There were times when she almost doubted her right to love him thus even in secret, but still the love lasted and grew. It was but another manifestation of the wonderful way in which God works out in his own good time and in his own way, through sorrow and suffering, the happiness for which each heart craves. Dorothea bore her burden of harshness in silence, stealing away to her room that none might see the tears, that none might know that in a Christian household, where there should have been nothing but gentleness and affection, a little child had to hide itself from a father who would not love it. And now that Dorothea Brevoort was a young woman, it was still the same.

This is one of the sad things of the world, and therefore it is well not to pass over it lightly, for of these sad things comes much that is good and happy in the end. That Dorothea Brevoort's childhood was not filled with long, sunny days of happiness was the fault of no one but her own father. That with each passing year her heart grew in strength and tenderness till at last it could bloom into the woman that Dorothea Brevoort became, shows that this after

all, was but one of the ways in which she was learning to be true to all that was good within herself. Not that her love toward her father was the blind worship that does not see the faults in the one who is loved. Oh, that in some way Dorothea might have been blind to her father's harshness, for then it would have been easier, so much easier. There was not one fault of his that she did not know. There was not one bit of harshness that she did not feel more keenly than words can tell. Still in spite of it all and through it all, her innocent heart clung to this love for her father, asking only to be loved in return at last.

It was wonderful that Dorothea's heart found strength to keep her burden of sorrow from being too heavy. Yet not only was it true, but Dorothea kept her suffering quite to herself, lest her father be blamed for his harshness. So to-day there live in the world men whose lives are filled with nothing but refined cruelty to their own, whom they should love. So there are men who are counted men of God, of whom all will tell of their integrity in all things, of their breadth of mind and justice, and there, in their homes, some little lonely child has fallen asleep with its lashes still wet with tears because of the selfishness of one of these very men. Oh, that in some way such a man could be brought face to face with himself, that he might see these things he is doing, that there could be stripped from him the prestige that has come with the years of right living that all have seen, leaving bare the years of wrong living that none have seen. If there is to be a day when the secret things shall be made known and each man and each woman

shall be judged by them, who shall say that any will be found more unworthy than the man or woman who has thus harmed a defenceless child, whose only sin is in loving in return for all that has been unkind, whose only fault is to have been unfortunate enough to have been brought into the world by such a man or woman?

Now that her silence was broken, now that at last the words that had been stifled for so long had been spoken, it was a wonderful relief to Mrs. Brevoort to have someone to whom she could tell as much of Dorothea's burden as she knew, especially when that one was Jacob Brevoort. She well knew the measure of his affection for Dorothea, and that he saw all these things in their true light. Yet she found it difficult to separate the things she herself had to bear from those that were Dorothea's. Still she endeavoured to do so as best she could, never guessing the burden she was bringing to Jacob Brevoort.

"If Dorothea had a brother," she said, "I think it would have been even harder for her, for then she would have had to see everything lavished on the boy."

Mrs. Brevoort stopped, for Jacob was shaking his head.

"You don't do Dorothea justice," he said. "I know her so much better than that. Her father could scarcely have neglected her more than he has, even if he had a boy of his own whom he wanted to train to take his own place. Even that would have made no difference to Dorothea. Can't you see how through the years, even as a little child, she always defended her father and tried to shield him from even our

criticism? Dorothea would have been just as unselfish if she had had a brother. It is harder now for her because she finds it impossible to fill a boy's place."

Jacob Brevoort crossed the room and stood beside the woman seated in the low rocker.

"We must be more kind to her," he said, "so much more kind to her. Sometimes when she thinks no one is watching, I can see how troubled and sad she is, but she hides it all with her smile, as soon as I speak to her. If her father——"

Mrs. Brevoort shook her head.

"It's no use, Jacob," she said, "you can't change Peter now. It is my fault. Perhaps from the beginning I should have been more firm. Don't think I want to shield him. I am only trying to be fair. Part of it, at least, is my fault."

"No," replied Jacob Brevoort, "you are wrong. I know my brother better than you do. Once his aversion is aroused, no matter how unreasonable it may be, it increases until it becomes as fixed and strong as his own determination, and nothing can alter it. I know just where the blame lies for this sorrow that has robbed Dorothea of all the happiness that should have been hers, and the blame shall lie where it belongs. You need not fear to harm your husband by making all the responsibility his."

Neither noticed that while he was speaking, Peter Brevoort entered and stood listening to his brother's words. When Jacob observed him, the two men faced each other squarely, Jacob continuing to speak in his quiet tone, but now addressing his brother.

"I was saying, Peter," he said, "that your preju-

dice against Dorothea because she is not a boy has become so fixed that nothing can change it. I think you can guess the rest of what I would say, so I will spare you the pain of listening to it."

It was so seldom that the two brothers thus faced each other, that Mrs. Brevoort rose and crossed the room and stood beside her husband appealingly.

"Peter," she said, "Peter, don't be angry. You don't understand what Jacob means."

Peter Brevoort pushed her aside.

"I understand well enough," he answered sharply. "You two together under a man's roof telling him how he should behave toward his daughter. I will not have it. So long as I live, I will go my own way in my own house. The man doesn't live who says that I am other than a Christian man and a kind father."

"The man does live," said Jacob Brevoort quietly, "who asserts that you are neither, though you stand far higher in the Moravian church than I do."

For an instant the two brothers eyed each other unflinchingly, as men do who measure each other's strength. Then something in Jacob's resolute, determined face made his brother turn from him. There was no doubt which was master now. As is always true with a cowardly man, he must needs vent himself on someone weaker still.

"No more of this," he said sharply, turning to his wife. "Dorothea and I will settle our own scores, and I want no meddling women in it, either."

Then he walked out of the room, his wife following. Jacob listened to Mrs. Brevoort, in her timid, pleading tones, entreating Peter to be more merciful.

Late that evening, Jacob Brevoort walked softly down the long hall and up the stairs and pushed open the door of Dorothea's room. To him the years made no difference. It was as if Dorothea were still a child, and he on his way to comfort her. In the light from the hall, Dorothea recognised him.

"Uncle Jacob," she said, "Uncle Jacob."

He crossed the room and sat down at the side of her bed.

"I wanted you to come so," she whispered. "I wanted somebody. I was afraid to call mother lest she and father would think I was a child again, instead of a grown woman."

"I know," he said gently. Then he stroked her hair, and Dorothea's hands found their way into his broad hand and rested there quietly. So for a long time, those two talked, not of the things that filled their minds, but of happy, cheerful things, as those who are courageous always try to do.

Yet to keep up one's courage is no light task, and both of them found it hard indeed, for Jacob Brevoort suffered as keenly as did his beloved Dorothea because of what she was forced to bear. Yet the hardest part to him was to see her wear a smiling face in spite of it all. Thus that night in trying to keep each other's courage from failing, those two hearts grew closer, always closer together, the great, strong heart of Dorothea's uncle, the tender one of Dorothea herself.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW MINISTER

IN the year 1848, Spring came after a long, long winter in which it seemed as though warmth and sunshine were but idle words. At last there followed days when there was a new softness in the south wind; when the hills that had been white had great bare patches of brown earth on them, when the brook grew until it was a wild torrent almost like those that Alen Therwith knew as a boy. Then came dark days, when the rain fell upon the land, washing away the snow and ice. The side of the Iron Hill was filled with hundreds of little rivulets that joined together at the foot of the valley, where they became a stream almost as great as the brook itself, transforming the lowland into the soft mire it had been before the great ditches were dug. After that came cloudless days filled with sunshine and stirring air, and both joined together in the great work of making the land green. First, the meadows became dry and firm. Then the little stream in the bottom of the valley of the Iron Hill dwindled until it was as tiny as the rivulets themselves that first formed it. Then it ceased to be. The brook, too, was now well within its banks, though still upon the bushes by its side were the leaves and sticks where the torrent had left them high and dry above the rushing water.

As the days passed, the sun grew warmer and

warmer. Now the sky was dotted with white clouds, like bunches of cotton sailing serenely by, clouds that told of summer time and of the days of June. Along Red Lane the violets grew in wild profusion, so thickly that one must trample them in passing, great violets whose long stems reached up from the damp, cold earth into the warm, sweet air of Spring. Mary Blake and Dorothea had their hands full of them one bright May day. They had spent the whole afternoon on the beach, watching the water and talking of the things young women delight in. When at last they turned homeward, it took them a long while to go even a little way, for at the sight of the unfolding beauty about her, the true self that was within Dorothea stirred and made her pause again and again.

"Oh, Mary," she exclaimed, as she stooped down among the violets, "do see them all. And here are tender little red leaves, just the colour that the leaves are in the Fall. I never noticed it before, did you?"

Mary Blake knelt there among the violets beside her friend. She and Dorothea were as unlike as could be, for though but slightly older, she was far more mature than Dorothea, and had a warm, motherly heart that long ago spread itself firmly about her companion, encompassing her with a love that was half motherly and half that of a friend who felt in herself the same longings, the same wonderings, the same doubts and uncertainties that Dorothea was beginning to feel.

"Let's not gather them," said Mary Blake. "We'll remember the place and see how they have grown by the next time we come."

So they went on up Red Lane and began to climb the hill slowly, until they came to an open space from which they could see the church standing at the foot of the hill to the west.

"I wonder when the new minister will come," said Mary Blake.

But Dorothea was dreaming—a habit that had long been hers. Sometimes there came to the girl in the sweet scent of the wild flowers a strange feeling that stole upon her so subtly that it almost stifled her. There were tears in her eyes even then, though, had Mary Blake asked, Dorothea could not have told her why. Even Mary did not understand some of these moods. She spoke a little sharply when she noticed that Dorothea had not answered her.

"I wonder when the new minister is coming?" she repeated.

Dorothea looked down the side of the slope and across the meadows to the blue strip of sea from which they had come. The wind stirred the girl's hair and brought the soft, warm color to her cheeks. Mary Blake looked, too. The beauty of it moved them both. Dorothea slipped her hand through her companion's arm.

"Let's not talk for a little while," she whispered. "It's so quiet and beautiful, I love all of it."

They stood for a moment motionless. Then they heard the sound of someone coming up the road. Dorothea turned quickly.

"Let's hurry, Mary," she said, "it's Alen Therewith."

The two girls made their way quickly up the road

and, entering the white house, shut the door sharply. Alen was close behind and at the sound, he smiled to himself, yet it was not a pleasant smile nor did it indicate happiness. Then he, too, went into the house.

A week later, the trees that were just beginning to bud on the day that Dorothea and Mary Blake walked along Red Lane together, were covered with tender green leaves, and all the orchards were white and pink in the glory of their blossoms. There was one apple-tree in the corner of the orchard that was all white. Stephen Lane stopped in the middle of the road and gazed at it without a word. The tree looked to him like a bride in her spotless raiment with the sun shining upon her. Stephen, who was a minister, should not have thought of these things, yet when one is young, one cannot always control his thoughts.

He had started the day before from the college at Bethlehem in Pennsylvania, where he had been trained for his life's work. The pride he felt when he heard that this Staten Island church wished him for its minister was great indeed, yet this feeling gave place to a nobler one, as he realised the full measure of his responsibility. Even before he started on his journey, he looked ahead through the years in which he would give faithfully all of himself to this good work in the new place that he had never seen, among new people to whom he as yet was but a name. Because he was young, he believed he could show them that at last there had come among them a man who counted nothing but what he could do for

them, whose whole self was given to them and for them, freely and splendidly, as becomes a man who has not forgotten the duty and responsibility God has placed on him.

It was early morning when Stephen Lane reached Staten Island and climbed upon the stagecoach that was to take him the rest of his journey. Yet as he approached this place in which he was to work, a new feeling came over him, for he found himself wanting to see it all before anyone saw him. He wanted to look down on the scene, on the stage that was to be the setting for the whole effort that, when it was ended, would be called the life of Stephen Lane. He wanted to steal in unobserved and see this place to which God had sent him. He pictured mentally the church, the house in which he was to live, the men and women whose minister he was to be. He must see it all first and alone.

So it was that he climbed down from the stagecoach onto the King's Highway near the western slope of the Iron Hill. He stood for a moment watching the stage coach disappear from view, leaving a cloud of dust behind it. Then with his bag in one hand and his hat in the other, he climbed the hill to the road that led from the white house down again to the King's Highway, at a point not far distant from the spot where Dorothea and Mary stood a few days before.

The apple tree was directly in front of him. Stephen Lane stood bareheaded in the noonday sun observing the tree seriously and steadily, as was his way. His face was strongly marked for one so

young. It showed that the responsibilities of life coming to him would find him ready for their burden, knowing and feeling keenly all that was his to bear, serious because of it, yet always strong, confident and cheerful. Something in his eyes showed the vigour of his manhood. Strength and sanity of a mind in which reasonableness and judgment were mingled with the gentleness of a woman were Stephen Lane's most marked characteristics. Added to this was the attribute that lifts manhood above all else in the world, the strength to be unselfish, no matter what the cost to one's self.

As Stephen stood there in the road, thinking of the apple tree whose blossoms reminded him of a bride, the sunshine was succeeded by shadow and a moment later a drop of rain landed squarely on his forehead. He crossed the road and sought such shelter as the apple-tree would give. Turning, his eyes caught a glimpse of the church at the foot of the hill and the little house by its side, which Stephen knew from that day on would be his. It was a long while before his eyes wandered from the little house. When they did, he looked up the Valley behind the Iron Hill to the north. He saw the green slope still in shadow with the brook making its way through it and past the church. He traced the course of the stream around the foot of the hill until it disappeared among the trees of Red Lane. Then Stephen looked up the hill at the great Dutch house, and as he looked, the sun broke through the clouds again, so that the whiteness of the house was intensified. Seventy-five years or more ago, along that very road, the red coats

of the British soldiers might have been seen on their way to the Sign of the Rose and Crown, while the sunlight fell then as on this day, on the Old-World gables of the white house. But Stephen Lane was not thinking of this. He saw only the homely, hospitable outlines, the shining window panes, the broad, comfortable chimneys, and the little windows under the eaves. For a moment, his mind pictured the attic they lighted, with its hewn beams and its stores of forgotten treasures.

Then, as always, Stephen was a dreamer. What will these Staten Island people, with their lack of imagination, think of their minister when they come to know this gentler side of him? But no such thought as this came to disturb Stephen or to make him afraid.

"I wonder," he said to himself, looking at the white house again, "who lives there?"

The rain ceased. Stephen went out into the road again, brushing from his coat some of the apple blossoms that had fallen in the passing shower. He was sorry that they must lie in the dust of the road, so he gathered them all up and slipped them in his pocket. Somehow their falling on him made him feel as though some pure thing had dropped from the sky and touched him like a benediction—a good omen for his work.

Stephen Lane started down the hill. Half way, he met a young woman coming up. He stopped.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "is not that the Moravian Church?"

Mary Blake, for it was she, stopped and looked at

him and smiled, the same friendly, sunny smile that Stephen always remembered.

"Oh, you are——" she said, and then stopped in some confusion.

Stephen smiled back at her.

"Yes," he said, "I——" and then he, too, was confused.

The girl held out her hand.

"I am Mary Blake," she said simply. "I am one of your congregation. They are waiting for you there in the little house next to the church. They expected you by the stagecoach."

"I know," said Stephen, "I did come by the stagecoach, but I got off up the road a little way. I wanted to see——"

This time Mary Blake laughed.

"You wanted to see us before we saw you," she said.

"Perhaps," replied Stephen doubtfully, "and thank you for making me sure I have not lost my way."

Then he went down the hill, crossed the road and walked up the steps to the little house. Mary Blake hurried up the hill. Only once did she pause. Then she turned and saw Stephen Lane standing on the porch of his house. Dorothea met her at the door.

"I have seen the new minister, Dorothea," she said, "and—and—he's splendid!"

CHAPTER V

THE SCHOOL

IN a neighbourhood so small as this one, its very isolation creates a certain independence enabling it to be self-sustaining, quite separate and apart from the rest of the world. This is especially true where the community, as was this one, is Moravian. There is something very high, very pure, in this quiet coming and going of a people who find in their belief in God a faith that makes them strong and calm and self-sufficient. Nor is this latter word used in any harsh sense, but as meaning merely that the church of the *Unitas Fratrum* teaches its people to find within their own hearts a peace that makes them content.

So it was at the time of our story with those who dwelt on the Iron Hill and along the Fingerboard Road to the east and on both sides of the King's Highway far to the west of the Iron Hill itself. So it may be with those who dwell there in these later days, for it would not be strange if there had come down to them through the years something of the spirit of those people among whom Stephen Lane lived and worked.

Then, as now, the school formed an important part in the work of the church of the United Brethren. Those who gathered together long ago in the forests of Bohemia and Moravia, there to worship God freely and as their own consciences dictated, learned

the secret of all progress this world is to make toward enlightenment and happiness. Thus the Moravian Church has always given education the support and encouragement that have often been denied it elsewhere.

Never before had the Moravian school on Staten Island offered its scholars as many benefits as it held out to them in the Fall of 1848, which was the very year Stephen Lane became the minister of the church at the foot of the Iron Hill. The little schoolhouse stood then beside the King's Highway, and from its windows could be had a glimpse of the sea sleeping in the sunlight. That Autumn there was added to the blessing that the knowledge of books brings, an even greater one—the blessing that comes always when a woman's heart imparts some of its purity to a little child.

The memorable meeting of the Elders which resulted in the school having these two for its teachers, was so characteristic of those who took part in it that it showed as could be done in no better way, their zeal and earnestness and also, alas! the selfishness of some of them.

It is not recalled how the school had come to lose its former mistress. The fact remains that it had, and that the five Elders of the Moravian Church met at the house of Thaddeus Knox to find someone to carry on the work.

The Knox house was an humble one, quite in keeping with its owner. It still stands where the brook crosses the Highway beyond the church, a tiny structure with a low-pitched roof like that of its more

100 THE SONG OF THE PINES

pretentious neighbour, the white house on the Iron Hill. Because both were built by men who came from the brave little country of dikes and windmills, the two houses, save in size, were quite alike.

When the north wind swept down from the valley of the frozen Hudson, the broad fireplace of Thaddeus Knox's house shielded its frail, dried-up owner, keeping him snug and comfortable as he deserved. In his well-worn suit of brown, rubbing his thin hands together nervously, he was the perfect picture of a man whose body the years had withered, but whose heart was as young as though old age was not knocking at the door. We will come to like this little unpretentious house and its still more unpretentious, kindly owner. So it is to have lived cheerfully through the years without letting the pinch of poverty fill them with bitterness. So it is to have gone without much that makes for happiness, yet never to have grown sour nor envious nor unlovable.

The Knox house had but one room on the ground floor, used alike as kitchen and dining-room. In the long evenings, Thaddeus Knox would sit alone before the open hearth while the wind howled without, and oftentimes neither the man nor his dog, sleeping at his feet, moved, till the hours of darkness were far gone.

On the night the Elders gathered there, they found Thaddeus Knox waiting at the open door to greet them. The lamp burned brightly upon the table, and everywhere was the scrupulous cleanliness characteristic not only of the house, but of its owner and all he possessed alike.

They all came in together, the two Brevoorts, John Blake and Thomas Witte, quite filling the little room. When they were seated, there was silence for a while. It was no light topic they were there to discuss, and one and all treated it soberly, as befitted so serious a matter. Even here Peter Brevoort smoked his Dutch pipe as though in his own home, and he kept his hat on his head, as always. At the opposite side of the room, the kindly face of Jacob Brevoort, now deep in thought, was turned toward the fire, finding its warmth welcome because of the crispness of the late September air.

Between the two brothers sat John Blake. On his cheeks there was still the glow from the brisk walk across the meadows and up Red Lane. It was easy to see that Mary Blake had gotten from her father something more than features like his own. The warm blood, the loving heart, the clear mind and high purpose that had come down through generations of men and women who lived rightly, had stamped themselves indelibly upon John Blake. No wonder that he was respected of men, nor was it strange that his daughter should be like unto him in all these things.

Last, but by no means least, the circle about the hearth was made complete by the solid frame of Thomas Witte. Ponderous and slow of movement, his face was scarce in keeping with his dignified person, but was as round and jolly as well could be, and he had, withal, a merry laugh that had stayed with him since the days of boyhood. So none would suspect that his happy face hid a tender heart that had known its own sorrow and loneliness.

At last, because he was host, Thaddeus Knox recounted in his shrill, dry voice the history of their school (though they all knew it by heart) and the purpose of their meeting. When he finished, Peter Brevoort slowly knocked the ashes from his pipe and filled it again, with the air of a man who did these things mechanically while he pondered deeply over some weighty question. Thomas Witte turned his merry little eyes from one companion to another, until he had looked at them all. Then he shifted his position uneasily, as he felt their glances upon him in turn.

"Friends," he said at last, "it certainly is a hard task we have to find a schoolma'am who will suit everyone. What I say is, why should we bring someone here when there are those among the children of our own people who can do the work? That's what I say."

In the silence that followed, Thomas Witte looked from one to the other of his companions as though seeking their acquiescence and support. John Blake turned toward him at last, and the two men smiled as do those who understand each other perfectly.

"Whom have you in mind?" he asked calmly.

Thomas Witte eyed him steadily. He knew and trusted this good friend of his so well.

"It's your Mary I had in mind," he said.

Peter Brevoort took the pipe from his mouth as though about to speak. Before he could utter a word, however, Jacob Brevoort interrupted. This was quite unusual, for Jacob seldom did other than hold his peace until Peter Brevoort had expressed his

opinion. Yet if he made an exception in this instance, perhaps it was only because he knew Peter's thought so perfectly.

"She is just the one," said Jacob Brevoort. "I wonder none of us thought of her before!"

"Yes," assented Thaddeus Knox, "she is just the one."

John Blake sat back in his chair and gazed into the fire for a long time.

"It isn't for me to be heard on this subject," he said at last, "save to tell you that if after you have considered it well, such is your decision, it shall then be as Mary herself decides."

In the pause that followed, however, there was a distinct feeling among them that someone was not entirely satisfied with the turn of events.

"The idea," said Peter Brevoort slowly, "is a good one. If she accepts, Mary is far better fitted for the work than anyone else we could hope to find. Moreover, I know of no reason why the church's money had not better be paid to one of our own daughters than to a stranger. Yet," he went on, as though more thoughtfully, "I have a doubt, and a grave one, whether the work will not be too much for her. Twenty boys and girls—it's too much, I say. I should favour having someone to help her."

Only Jacob Brevoort saw the drift of Peter's words, and the glance he turned toward him showed how thoroughly the one brother knew the other. As for the rest, they listened in respectful silence.

"It should be someone," Peter Brevoort went on, "who would be a companion to Mary, someone——"

He was interrupted by the voice of Thaddeus Knox pitched even higher than usual in his eagerness.

"That's it!" he exclaimed, "that's it! Someone to be a companion to Mary. Why, man, it's your own daughter!"

Peter Brevoort sat looking about him as though dazed, as does a man who is trying to understand, to comprehend, and failing, seeks the aid of those about him. Yet it must be said to the credit of the other men that none save Jacob saw the true significance of it, and he, only because of all that the years had brought to him from Peter Brevoort.

"They would be very happy working together, I know," said John Blake. "The girls have always been inseparable. This suggestion takes away the most serious of the objections I feared Mary would find. I knew she would be reluctant to consent to anything separating her from Dorothea for the best part of each day."

Thaddeus Knox rubbed his hands together just from sheer rejoicing over the happy solution of their difficulty.

"All the congregation will be glad," he said, "and the school will be more successful than ever." Yet even as he spoke his confidence wavered. "Suppose Dorothea should not care to undertake it," he said doubtfully, "suppose——"

Peter Brevoort brought his great hand down on the table with a resounding blow that made the lamp fairly dance.

"Not care to!" he thundered. "Not care to!

What has she got to say about it? I tell you right here and now that if I say she shall do this, that's all there is to it. And I do say she shall."

Perhaps because they were used to his vehemence, the others showed no surprise. Only Jacob Brevoort gave any indication of resentment at his brother's words.

"Then we can consider it settled, provided Mary consents," said Thaddeus Knox, as he looked at John Blake. The latter rose.

"I will ask her this very night," he said, preparing to go.

The others followed his example, and soon the house beside the King's Highway was silent again, with only the solitary figure of the owner in his old suit of brown, sitting by the hearth.

That night Peter Brevoort walked home alone, for Jacob and Thomas Witte had gone away together. As for John Blake, his way home led down Red Lane and across the level land. Peter Brevoort rather welcomed being alone. He wanted to think over the events of the evening and ascertain just whither his impulse had led him. He did not know that it was pride that would not let him be silent and see John Blake's daughter alone chosen for the school, but it was pride for all that, together with a certain meanness in his grasping nature that made him eager for the slight compensation Dorothea would earn. So the years of plenty had failed to take from him the desire to turn an extra penny when he could. But the evening had shown another strange contradiction in his nature. While on the one hand, he was not con-

tent to see Mary Blake have the school alone, yet on the other, lest John Blake's daughter gain some prestige over his own, he must suggest as Mary's assistant Dorothea, whom he had been at pains to tell of her own worthlessness, and how he despised her.

Before Peter Brevoort could ascertain just the result of that evening's meeting, so far as he himself was concerned, he reached his own door. In the kitchen he found Alen Therwith, and because they had long since become very confidential, he told Alen all that had happened. Somehow, Alen's satisfaction, which he did not try to conceal, pleased Peter Brevoort and made him more content with his own part in that night's work. Nor had Alen Therwith reason to be other than satisfied with it all, too. He might well be glad that things had fallen out so well, for what could suit him better than to have Dorothea thus occupied while he was busy with his own work? Alen Therwith was glad to have her thus removed from things that might possibly interfere with his own plans.

That night, John Blake went home through the darkness down Red Lane with mind and conscience at peace, as a good man should. To know him perfectly, it was but necessary to have seen his house as it then was, for in some strange fashion, houses often show what manner of men their owners are. That night, the light streamed out through the darkness to meet him and told him by its very cheerfulness of the welcome that awaited his coming, so that his pace quickened at the thought of it. He, too, was eager to tell the news.

In these later days, though its chimneys are toppling and the windows broken, John Blake's house still stands hospitably facing the road that now stretches itself to the west, crossing Red Lane and travelling the length of the level land, parallel to the sea. Now, on some summer day, before the autumn turns the meadows brown and yellow, the old house is content, rejoicing in the quiet all about it, forgetting its emptiness, forgetting that all are gone, in the happiness of clinging to the memory of those other days. In such a spot as that, where a good man has lived, where there have been many days filled only with things that are good, and where the sound of merry children has brought happiness to every corner of that home, is it strange the sunlight falls more softly just there?

Thus it came about that the Winter of 1848-49 was a memorable one in the Moravian school. The two who spent their days and energies for its success brought to bear upon the work, oh, so much more than is taught in books. The boys and girls carried away with them something of the spirit of the two who taught them, so ever after they were more gentle, more noble, because of the gentleness and nobility of Mary Blake and Dorothea. Thus the Elders builded better than they knew.

CHAPTER VI

SAINT NICHOLAS' EVE

IT is doubtless more charitable to draw the curtain over the first months the new minister spent in the church at the foot of the Iron Hill. Yet Stephen Lane himself, were he here to-day, would want all his failures and mistakes that he made in the beginning, told of fully. The only parts he would ask to have hidden would have to do solely with his successes. So it always is with a true man, and well might Stephen's modesty be eager to pass lightly over all that would show how speedily he gained the confidence and affection of those people.

Stephen Lane won his way from the very beginning with those among his congregation who, like himself, were young, and those who were old. It was only the few who were still young enough to feel what they had lost with the passing of their youth and were not yet old enough to look upon the loss philosophically, who were prone to envy Stephen Lane and to begrudge him the good-will that all save themselves accorded him. They were at pains to point out his mistakes unsparingly, yet when all was said and done, the errors in no wise reflected on his earnestness, or the sincerity of his efforts to do his work as his heart told him it should be done. Moreover, it was a long time before even his friends did

full justice to the unselfishness that was the motive in Stephen Lane's every act. Nor by this is he to be deemed to have been one of those meek, self-effacing individuals of little use to himself and none to anyone else—far from it. There was nothing that he was called upon to do in which he did not show himself in no uncertain manner. It was only that the ability to put aside his own interests never failed him, where by so doing there could be gained greater happiness for others. Nay, more than this, his mind had the trick of solving every situation, not only from his own point of view or that of the others involved, but from the broader standpoint which sees things in their true relations, and measures them justly. Moreover, Stephen Lane had the strength to do what was right.

Of those first months, Stephen Lane devoted most of his time to getting acquainted. He wanted each man and woman to come to know him as thoroughly as he should know them.

Speedily enough, Thomas Witte and Thaddeus Knox and John Blake found in Stephen a man after their own heart, and he in them staunch supporters. It was then Stephen came to know those who lived in the white house on the Iron Hill.

Strange in the telling, the first person to be made a member of the Moravian Church, after Stephen Lane's coming, was Alen Therwith. If a motive is sought in this, it may fail to be found, though it must be borne in mind that Alen Therwith was a man whose every act, however hidden its purpose may have been, bore some relation to the ultimate achievement

by him of whatever he sought. Just what he was seeking in this was for the future to show.

Stephen Lane found himself wondering just what prompted Alen in this act, for he contrasted Alen's aggressive domination of all about him with the new humility he assumed after becoming a member of the church. Then Stephen reproached himself bitterly for his own lack of confidence in this other man. Yet Stephen Lane could never quite satisfy himself as to just why Alen Therwith, so sure and so successful in everything he did, whose name was on every tongue and who was fast becoming the very pride of Staten Island itself, should come to him and tell him over and over again how he depended on him for guidance in everything. It must be said to Stephen's credit that he firmly put his questionings aside and accepted Alen as a brother should, giving no heed to the thoughts that in a more selfish man might have made him distrust Alen's motive.

Often hidden dangers are felt instinctively. This is true particularly when there is much at stake. So it was that Alen Therwith came to know immediately that Stephen Lane was the man he had most to fear, the man who, all unconscious of it then, was in the end most likely to frustrate Alen in his efforts to add Dorothea Brevoort to the things he promised himself he was to possess. Alen had the keenness to discern Stephen Lane's true worth long before anyone else, and he read Stephen's character in all its breadth and strength and unselfishness with singular accuracy. He realised that by making Stephen know that he depended on him for guidance, Stephen would be unsel-

fish enough, would consider it his duty to eliminate himself if it chanced that each desired the same thing.

It must be remembered that the very traits of character that enabled Alen Therwith to maintain his domination over most other men, gave him too, the foresight to plan far, far in advance each step that would be necessary for him to take to gain his end, and all this long before the simple folk about him had even a dim suspicion of his motives. Stephen Lane even, up to this time, had done no more than ask himself for some explanation of Alen's friendliness and his apparent dependence on Stephen for advice. It was only because Stephen was slow to doubt another that this was so. The selfish, grasping plans that Alen Therwith's mind could only formulate, must necessarily, because of their selfishness, have failed in the end. So it has always been and always will be, where men who seek only for themselves are at last confronted and opposed by those who put the happiness of others before their own. Sooner or later, their own selfishness works inevitably their undoing. Sometimes it is hard to find faith to believe this when on every hand there is seen nothing but the great measure of worldly success that has come to those who have sought only for themselves. If worldly success were all of life, it would be hard indeed to be unselfish. Whether we believe it or not, oh, we of little faith, true happiness does not lie in material things, which in their time, must pass away. All that is worth seeking is eternal. It was just this that made the wide difference in the lives of Alen

Therwith and Stephen Lane, for the former sought only to possess for himself all that would gratify him, while the latter only wanted to help others find their true happiness.

It was the sixth of December, Saint Nicholas' Day, in the year 1848.

Saint Nicholas' Day is to the children of Holland as Christmas throughout the rest of the civilised world. On that day, Saint Nicholas himself goes into every Dutch home, high and low, rich and poor, and the children gathering about, hear words of praise, and sometimes, alas, of correction, from this their Saint. Then, too, there are gifts for each and all.

Since Dorothea had come into the world, Peter Brevoort in this, as in all things, followed the custom of his country. Thus in the white house on the Iron Hill, Saint Nicholas' Day was observed as carefully as though the waters of the Bay were those of the Zuyder Zee. Yet in observing it, Peter Brevoort stripped the day of all the love and gentleness toward Dorothea that it should have held for her. He never relaxed the hardness of his heart, maintaining his professed position as a good father, though it was but an empty form. So it had been through the years. So it still was now that Dorothea had grown to womanhood.

On this particular Saint Nicholas' Day, as for many that preceded it, the evening found a number of young people gathered at the white house. Peter Brevoort was at pains each year to object to their presence, but his brother, in his gentle way, reminded him that this was but part of the Dutch custom, now

that those who had been children together were grown to womanhood and manhood.

Of course, Mary Blake had always been one of these. Ralph Curtis, a young man of about Stephen's age, was another, and on this particular Saint Nicholas' night, both he and Mary were in the kitchen of the great white house, for their Saint Nicholas' party. Alen Therwith too was one of the circle. Dorothea long ago resented his sharing all that she and Mary and Ralph tried to do together. It was not alone that the years of his life were almost double hers in number. Rather, Dorothea saw how far apart they were in thought and feeling. In her effort to be fair, Dorothea put all this away from her. Then, too, her father had expressed himself plainly as to what her attitude toward Alen should be, though the girl's heart told her it was all quite wrong.

Dorothea Brevoort was too unsophisticated to see how deftly Alen pushed himself forward. Not alone with her, but with the whole household as well, he was making himself more and more essential, more necessary with each passing day. None among them save, perhaps, Jacob Brevoort, saw it then. He watched Alen Therwith become part of their home without apprehension, for he did not fear the effect of Alen's presence till he saw how it was all centering on Dorothea. Yet there was nothing for him to do but to watch and to guard her as best he could. The world has seen many men like Jacob Brevoort, whose only object in life seems to be to make the way easier and safer for others. Such a man does all his kind acts secretly, lest someone guess the nobility of his

nature. It is this that makes him a true man, for the good that is done in secret, the unselfishness of which no one knows, and the trials of which none guess, are the brave things that mark a man and make him worthier, so that a greater happiness is his, which others, failing in this, never find.

That night there was a new face among the favoured few at the white house on the Iron Hill. At Jacob Brevoort's suggestion, Ralph had promised to bring the new minister, if he could. But Ralph had come alone.

The merriment was at its height when Stephen arrived. He was sorry he had promised Ralph to go, yet his duty to Peter Brevoort and Mrs. Brevoort made it necessary for him to accept when they had been kind enough to invite him. Moreover, Stephen Lane found it hard to take no part in these good times. His youth and something besides, made him want it, made him need it, yet the knowledge of his responsibilities, the certainty that all the young happiness was but for him to watch from afar, made such an evening as this hard indeed for him.

As he remembered it afterward, Stephen Lane never felt older and more awkward than when he sat and talked that night with Mrs. Brevoort in her sitting-room. Yet he would learn his part, he found himself thinking—for he must learn it as it was to be his always, some quiet gossip over the teacups with the older women and a word or two with the men—that was the proper share the minister should have in the good times of his people. Perhaps on this night there would be besides a little talk with

Mary Blake, and a word or two with Ralph, yet as always, there would be nothing more than a greeting with Dorothea.

As usual, Mrs. Brevoort was all motherly kindness toward him.

"I hope, Mr. Lane," she said, "that your new duties are not proving too heavy."

Stephen assured her that they were not.

"Your house is quite comfortable?" she asked.

"The committee had such a time getting it ready for your coming."

Stephen smiled as he thanked her.

"It is quite comfortable," he said. "You have all been most kind. I have nothing to ask for."

Yet as he spoke, his eyes wandered from the mellow lamplight to the fire in the great broad chimney and from there, to the Old-World furniture, the low settee in the window, the little shining panes of glass on which the frost sparkled. His mind compared it involuntarily with another room there at the foot of the Iron Hill where, far into the night, long after this room had grown quiet and the merriment gone and the lights, and sleep had come to the whole household, he would be at his desk with his head bowed low over the paper, and there would be no sound save the scratching of his pen and the knocking of the winter wind against the pane. Stephen Lane's eyes sought Dorothea's fair hair, and in spite of himself, he sighed.

Yet it must not be imagined that Stephen Lane thought of these things with self-pity. Rather, recognising keenly the bareness of his own life, the lone-

liness that each day was becoming greater, he would find in the very bareness and loneliness, strength and courage to bring happiness to those about him, and thus unselfishly in the end, to himself.

Mrs. Brevoort, good woman though she was, neither saw Stephen's glance nor guessed the thoughts her questions brought to his mind. It was enough that the minister said he was comfortable. She was sorry that he was so young, but, as she told some of the other women in the congregation, it was a fault he would outgrow.

At that moment, Mrs. Brevoort was called away. Stephen looked about him again, or rather, looked at Dorothea. She sat with Mary Blake and Ralph and Alen Therwith, in one corner of the room. They were all laughing heartily. Even Alen seemed for the moment to be as young as the rest. Stephen Lane looked away from the little group. He was not needed there. He rose to go. Ralph Curtis sprang to his feet and seized Stephen's hand impetuously.

"Surely you're not going, Mr. Lane—Stephen, I mean. I never can get quite used to calling you Stephen," he added apologetically.

"I have work to do," Stephen replied, smiling, "and even Saint Nicholas himself will not write my sermon for me."

Dorothea rose and crossed the room to where they stood.

"I am sorry to have you go," she said simply, holding out her hand to Stephen. "It is good of you to have given us as much of your time as you have."

Stephen looked down at her thoughtfully.

"Good of me?" he asked. "It was a pleasure to come. It was very kind of your mother to invite me."

A few minutes later Stephen found himself out in the impenetrable darkness of the bitter December night—the night of Saint Nicholas' Day, when there should have been no bitterness, and when each heart should have been filled with happiness till there was no room for darkness anywhere. Then Stephen remembered that Dorothea Brevoort was the only person to whom he had said good-night.

"After all," he told himself, "it did not matter much about anyone else."

Sometimes the most trivial incident impresses itself indelibly upon the mind. Stephen Lane never forgot those few minutes on his way that Saint Nicholas' night, from the white house on the Iron Hill to his own little one. He was happier than he had ever been before, happier than he dreamed a man could ever be. After he lit his study lamp, he seated himself at his desk. He wanted to think. He wanted to understand the meaning, the true meaning of these new thoughts crowding so fast into his heart that they could no longer be denied. Stephen rested his head on his arm on the desk. For a long time there was no sound in the little room, nor did Stephen move.

When at last he rose, the dull grey of morning showed across the eastern sky. So it must have been that after all Saint Nicholas wrote the sermon that night, for it is quite certain that Stephen Lane did not.

CHAPTER VII

A SINNER TURNS TO REPENTANCE

ONE Sabbath evening, there were visitors at the Brevoort house. Because of them, Peter Brevoort had given up his familiar chair in the kitchen, and with much reluctance, spent his evening in the sitting-room. Nor did his ill-humour decrease when he saw how much favour Dorothea found with their guests. It was a strange trait in this man to refuse to admit to himself that Dorothea was well liked by other people, yet had any spoken disparagingly of her, he would have resented it. He reserved that privilege solely for himself. While, too, he was willing to use Dorothea's accomplishments for his own benefit where he could, yet that night, when they asked her to sing, he did not attempt to conceal his displeasure. Thus a man's selfishness makes him sadly illogical in all things save in obedience to his selfishness.

Alen Therwith was selfish too, but he had the wit to conceal it when to have done otherwise would have been to his disadvantage. Thus that night he joined the others in asking for the music. Then he stood beside Dorothea while she sang. How little she suspected his purpose in this! Nor did she see how familiar his attitude was. But the others noticed it, and gained just the impression Alen intended they should. He wanted them to believe that all this was

a familiar sight in the old Dutch house, whereas it was in truth the first time. Even in so little a thing as this, how careful Alen was! He estimated to a nicety just what his actions indicated of his relations toward all of the household in general, and Dorothea Brevoort in particular. It was all, needless to say, quite to his advantage, quite as became the man who had done for these very people all that Alen had.

There was one moment that night, however, when Alen Therwith was far from comfortable. Dorothea sang an old song, the words of which took Alen back to a night long gone in a home far up in the Welsh mountains where a boy lay on the floor before the fire, listening to a woman repeating the words of the song and trying to tell the boy that it meant the greatest thing in the world.

Dorothea did not want to sing that particular song, for it was the one she liked best of all. She tried never to sing it when there was anyone to listen, yet because she must, that night she sang it bravely. Both she and Alen were quite relieved when the song was ended, for with him it stirred for an instant the conscience that had slept so long. With Dorothea it roused all the best that was in her, so that her heart tried to find expression in her voice. So each of them for a different reason, endeavoured to conceal the effect of the music. So it is that good and bad alike are often hidden away, lest someone will guess, lest to the view of another the secret self will be laid bare. Yet God gave each of us this hidden self, that each in turn might learn to know himself, and then learn to help others.

While she was singing, Dorothea felt an almost irresistible desire to turn around, as though somebody was close behind her. She thought Alen Therwith had resumed his chair. When the song was finished, she turned and found him standing there. It was not the first time she had been strongly conscious of her dislike for his presence, yet now she was ashamed to find it so, and tried to place the fault upon herself rather than upon Alen. Yet at that moment, Dorothea almost shrank from Alen Therwith. She had not even wanted him to hear the song. She knew now that because he could not understand it she was glad, for she did not want it to be that he should. She feared lest he might guess what the song meant to her. Yet the justice and fairness of Dorothea's nature rose to help her to try to banish these thoughts as unworthy and wrong. Then, too, duty toward her father made her try to overcome this dislike. Moreover, there was really nothing for her to resent or to be displeased with in Alen's behaviour toward her. In her effort to be fair toward him and to do as she knew her father would wish as well, Dorothea blamed herself far more than she should, yet even then, the comparison between Alen Therwith and Stephen Lane came inevitably—so marked that she did not try to hide from herself how unfavourable it was to Alen. Yet until that night, the comparison had been an unconscious one on her part, for Dorothea would not willingly judge another, especially where such judgment was harsh.

In her effort to be just to Alen, Dorothea was unfair to herself. Lest in her growing dislike she

should not treat him justly in all things, she was in danger of carrying the effort too far. It was this that misled Alen Therwith that night, making him believe that Dorothea's judgment of him was far different from what it really was. Yet because of his conceit and selfishness, he believed it all but perfectly natural and not to be wondered at. Indeed, he would have thought it strange in Dorothea, or in anyone, for that matter, if they did not accept him at his own measure, at the value he placed upon himself.

Perhaps Dorothea felt intuitively Alen's true intentions toward her. Alen had been careful from the very first day he saw Dorothea to encourage on her part only friendliness toward him, nor could he now feel that she did not like him. It would require something far more blunt than her carefully concealed dislike for him to convince Alen that he was unwelcome. Perhaps, too, in her effort to meet him as frankly as he appeared to meet her, Dorothea was more kind than she intended. Then, too, by reason of their living in the same house, they were thrown much together, and Alen and Peter Brevoort as well, were more than willing to take advantage of this fact. That Dorothea's father had no motive other than the wish to please Alen is certain, yet the time for Alen to drop the mask of friendliness and stand before her as his true self was not yet, nor, indeed, might it ever be.

After the visitors were gone, the quiet of Sunday evening fell again all about the white house. The family had returned to the kitchen, and Peter Brevoort sat again in his chair with the great Bible spread

122 THE SONG OF THE PINES

upon his knees and his Dutch pipe laid aside for once, (for he would never smoke while he read). Everywhere there was neatness and cleanliness, everything in perfect order for this day of rest.

Peter Brevort began to read one chapter from the Holy Scriptures as was his custom, while the rest sat quietly by. Sometimes when he finished reading, he talked for a while after the manner of a man who has pondered long over the profound things of life. Often he quoted the day's sermon, and Dorothea would smile as she saw her father struggling to catch the full meaning of Stephen's words.

That particular Sunday, Stephen Lane had spoken of grace and urged them all to give their strictest attention to this, that they might never neglect the wonder of his great privilege their Father in Heaven had given them, that of going directly to Him always. Then Stephen had gone on to speak of forgiveness, of the love and love of each one of His willingness to help and save the sinner where there was nothing but sinners and sinners.

At that Stephen Lane might have known that each Sunday Dorothea took his words home in her heart and that she was the last meaning of the words alone, but at that Stephen tried to put into them besides, all that he meant to him. Then too she treasured them and would read them again and again, that she might know them all that Stephen could want to tell her, and might be one to her nothing of what he said, of his words to learn. Dorothea had no doubt that his words were meant for her. It was that she was ready to see that she, though only

one of many, was still a part of his care and thought. Dorothea Brevoort had not yet dreamed of a more blessed day to come, when, no longer one of many, she was to feel surrounding her heart, surrounding her very self on every side, such care and thoughtfulness and strength and tenderness as she should never find anywhere else throughout the wide world.

So that Sabbath night, the effect of Stephen Lane's words was still fresh in Dorothea's heart. In spite of the limited opportunities of being with Stephen, she was beginning to understand his generous nature, and that night, as she found herself turning away from Alen Therwith, she was ashamed that so soon after Stephen had spoken, she should fail with Alen. The knowledge of her shortcoming made her almost eager to atone for it. When, later in the evening, Alen Therwith found her alone in the kitchen, she was quite willing to stop for a while to talk with him.

"Your father seemed quite impressed with the sermon," Alen began.

Now that he himself was a member of the church, Alen liked to talk of these things. Nor did Dorothea guess that it was only for the effect upon her. She thought she could begin to see a distinct improvement in Alen, since he had had the opportunity of knowing Stephen Lane.

"Yes," she replied, "I think Father likes what Mr. Lane says."

Then she was conscious of being sorry that she had mentioned Stephen's name. She felt a strong desire to run away, to shut herself in her room, to

banish Alen and his presence, to think of Stephen. Dorothea liked to think that had Stephen lived long ago, when they called men by what they were, his name would have been "Stephen the Thoughtful." It might have been "Stephen the Unselfish," but Dorothea liked the other name better. She was glad that in one's imagination, at least, romance is not unreal. She saw Stephen Lane, even in their prosaic Staten Island, fighting a more gallant fight than any knight of old. She saw him holding the lives of men and women in his hand, because of their love for him, because he never failed them in anything, because he thought first and always of what was right for them. No wonder she found it hard to talk to Alen Therwith that Sabbath night. Because he did not know all that a woman's heart can know of purity and virtue, Alen Therwith failed completely to understand Dorothea's mood. Yet he tried something quite new, for he assumed a distinct attitude of humility toward Dorothea. The Sunday quiet all about gave him an excellent opportunity of showing to her how he was reaching out in the endeavour to make himself more worthy than before. The appeal to Dorothea was very direct, very strong, more so than even Alen, with all his keenness, imagined it could be, for he little guessed how her conscience had striven to make her kind toward him, because Stephen would have been so, and how the new manner he assumed that night for the first time exaggerated in her mind the injustice she believed she had done him.

"When the minister spoke of prayer this morning," Alen said, "and again to-night when your

father mentioned it, I was almost driven to confess that I did not know just what they meant. I have not become enough of a churchman, I guess, to make that possible."

Dorothea looked at Alen Therwith in surprise. Surely she had not heard aright. Yet Alen went on quietly:

"You see, I was ashamed to let them know, even to let Stephen know that I was not able to follow his suggestion. You must teach me about it, Dorothea, for I know your prayers are the kind mine should be."

Dorothea was quite disarmed. Alen thought it was the suggestion of flattery in his words that had had its effect. So in spite of all his plans and his keenness, Alen Therwith could not do Dorothea's nature justice. She had not heeded the reference to herself. What she thought was that Stephen Lane had reached down and touched this man—that it was all the effect of Stephen's words. She felt that she had been hindering where she should have helped. She would make up for it now.

"You will soon learn about praying," she said gently. "You must have faith to believe, to trust, that is all. For a long time it meant with me nothing but some idle words to say before I went to sleep."

Alen Therwith rose and crossed the room, and stood by her. He was succeeding quite well, he flattered himself. She had never spoken thus to him before. After a little pause, Dorothea continued:

"I soon found how much more it meant than that. We must just keep on trying, must be faithful every day in asking our Father in Heaven to help us as

only He can. It is in this way, I think, that after a while we grow closer and closer to God, so that we can understand more clearly all that he wants us to do."

"I think I understand," said Alen Therwith slowly. Dorothea looked at him eagerly.

"You are going to try?" she asked. "He—I—that is, I am sure the minister would be so glad if he should know of it."

"Yes," said Alen, "I am going to try."

"That is so good," said Dorothea. "You must never weary of it. I know you never will, for you are so determined when once you start upon a thing."

Then she rose, and, crossing the room, passed out of the door.

Alen laughed aloud. He had been quite successful, even more so than he had hoped. He laughed again at Dorothea's earnest words. Then he turned to find Dorothea herself standing in the door.

"Why are you laughing?" she asked.

Alen only shrugged his shoulders.

But Dorothea did not let even this incident arrange itself against Alen. She well knew all that Stephen Lane was trying to do for him. She knew, too, that if Stephen felt toward a person the distrust she had of Alen, it would be but another reason for showing him more patience, more sympathy, more forgiveness. Dorothea would not fail the high mark she knew Stephen Lane set for himself.

That night, Dorothea Brevoort's prayers had added words. This time, strange in the telling, they were for Alen Therwith, that he might come to under-

stand, might feel as part of himself that which Stephen Lane pointed out to them that very day.

The man for whose sake these words found their way to Dorothea's lips, slept that night under the same roof, with no thought of his own unworthiness beside the goodness of this one who asked for him. Still scheming, planning, Alen Therwith fell asleep. After a time, in the quiet of her own room, trusting, believing, hoping, Dorothea slept too. Oh, Dorothea, how many gentle hearts like yours have gone through life trying thus to be true to the best they know? The world is better because once there lived Dorothea Brevoort, with whom the love of God was the first thing, bringing with it the love of good and the strength to do what was right and to be true to the good—for the love of God means nothing less. Yet it is hard to know that there were those who tried to take advantage of your innocence and of the simplicity and purity of yourself, Dorothea. It was hard to have such things come near to you or to know even now, that once they threatened you.

There was still another means by which Alen Therwith sought to gain favour with Dorothea without seeming to do so. Yet in this he was to fail, too, for again there was opposed to him a woman's honest heart that could not find in Alen the true note that it needed, to give it full confidence in him.

Mary Blake attracted Alen as did every woman to whom Nature had given a physique that matched his own. Yet when Alen compared her with Dorothea, he saw how much more finely chiselled the latter was, how much more exquisite and dainty. Yet he did full

justice to the splendid young woman he saw Mary Blake to be. It was only that Dorothea was the rarer type, and so to him more to be prized and more to be desired. The womanhood that Dorothea Brevoort embodied appealed at once to his whole nature, for in her he found the unattainable simplicity, the grace and dignity that feels its own worth and the priceless-ness of its own heart and soul and self. These things Alen Therwith would possess for his own, nor did it matter by what means he came into that possession.

Thus he sought to reach Dorothea again through Mary Blake, but none understood his effort more plainly than did Mary himself. Because of her strong love for Dorothea, because of the intimacy between them, she knew Dorothea's true self as did no one else. She saw the woman Dorothea was to become. She would guard her well, as one friend should another. So Mary Blake kept Alen Therwith at a distance, in spite of all his endeavour. Sometimes her thoughts were like Stephen's, though for a different reason. Yet there undoubtedly was about Alen Therwith's nature something that was actually repellent, though she had to admit that he was far above the average of the other men. In his vigorous mind, in his equally active and vigorous body, in his ability to accomplish much, and his courage in everything, he was by nature and achievement, a leader.

Yet Mary Blake saw well all that he lacked, the power to understand, to comprehend the inmost things, the things that count, and without which, Mary knew that Dorothea could find no happiness.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STRANGE BOY

ONE of the ideas Stephen Lane brought with him to the church that stood at the foot of the Iron Hill was the firm belief in the inherent goodness to be found by those to whom Providence gave the opportunity of dwelling in the beautiful places in the world. Could he have had his own way, Stephen Lane would have desired everyone to live in the green country, face to face with all that he found so ennobling. It was because he loved Nature with a love that drew only faith and comfort and happiness from it that Stephen wanted everyone else to see with his eyes all of God and His wisdom that is to be found in flowers and trees and sky and sea. Stephen Lane liked to draw such inspiration as was his from all these things. He was never happier than when pointing out to little children, and their elders, too, as far as his own limitations permitted, all of God he found in Nature about him. Time and again he rejoiced over the particular spot in which he was privileged to work because of its wonderful beauty, whether it was Winter or Summer, rain or shine. And even to this day, now that all the changes have come to Red Lane and to the Iron Hill, it is still one of the most beautiful of places.

One early Spring day in the year 1849, Stephen

Lane descended the steps of the little house beside the church just as Jacob Brevoort passed. The two men shook hands heartily.

"Stephen," said Jacob Brevoort, going directly to the point, as was his way, "if you can, if it would not be violating any confidence—if you think it right, I want you to tell me something about this strange boy you have brought home with you."

"Certainly," replied Stephen readily, "I am very glad to tell you all that I know of him, though it is but little. I found him in New York the last time I was there. He is only one of the many young ones of the city to whom sunshine and flowers and days of quiet and the pure air of the country are unknown. I wanted him to have them for a little while, so that the good that is in him will have a chance to grow."

"I know, Stephen, I know," said Jacob Brevoort kindly, "you are only trying to help him as you have helped others before, but this time it won't succeed. Besides, it is hurting you in your influence over the people, in your work for the church. The congregation don't like it—I must tell you that in all kindness. All the children and most of the men and women are afraid of him, Stephen. His misshapen body, his long arms, the red hair, the appearance of being old, all mark him as peculiar, and then, Stephen, because of his great strength, his violence, his lack of control, even though he is but a boy, there is some reason in their fears."

Stephen Lane shook his head.

"I know," he said, "I realise fully all that you say, but I am the only one who has any control over him."

He is a strange creature and he is absolutely alone. What will become of him if I, too, desert him? I am indeed sorry to hear of the other things of which you speak—my losing influence with my people. If this is so—and I know it is, hearing it from you—I am only sorry. But I can't help it," he added thoughtfully, "I cannot alter what I feel to be my duty toward Ruy Calidan."

Stephen knew it to be his duty to shield Ruy by keeping even from Jacob Brevoort a clearer knowledge of the boy's peculiarities. What would any of the staid, prosaic members of his congregation think, if he told them the least part of the strange youth that had been Ruy's, of his unreasonable hatred of all save Stephen, of the strange things he told Stephen of his mother and of his father whom it was the one object in his life to seek out, to find?

Jacob Brevoort looked at Stephen Lane long and earnestly. Affection for the young man, pride in him, faith in his truth and worth, were mingled in Jacob Brevoort's glance. He laid his hand on Stephen's shoulder.

"Perhaps you are right, Stephen," he said slowly. "At any rate, I know you are only following your conscience, and I know that you will always do whatever you believe to be right, no matter what the cost to you. Only it is hard to hear them criticising you for it all, Stephen. Though I must confess," he went on apologetically, "that I don't fancy the lad myself. There is something repulsive about him that rouses one's dread of the supernatural, of the inexplicable. He seems to embody some evil genius.

Then, too, from all I hear, I guess there is no doubt that the boy is wild."

"Yes," replied Stephen, "there is no doubt, and for that very reason I want to keep him here with me in my own house, where there is a chance——"

Just then the door of the little house opened, and Ruy Calidan himself came out and, walking down the steps, stood beside Stephen Lane. He glanced at Jacob Brevoort defiantly. The latter's description of him had indeed been a true one. Even the boy's clothes hung upon his huge body in such a manner as to heighten the impression that he was déformé. Seldom indeed did one of his years possess such strength as he. It was apparent even now as he stood beside Stephen, eying Jacob Brevoort narrowly, suspiciously, his light blue eyes almost hidden in the freckled, yellow skin.

"Mr. Lane promised to take me for a walk," said Ruy sharply.

Stephen turning toward him, put both his hands on the boy's broad shoulders.

"You must be patient, Ruy," he said gently. "You have interrupted Mr. Brevoort. Go into the house and wait until we have finished talking."

The hot blood flamed into Ruy Calidan's face. He looked at Jacob Brevoort angrily. His great frame quivered as though in physical pain, and the blood receding from his face left it so white that the vivid red of his hair was more noticeable than ever. Then he turned toward Stephen Lane and the anger died from his eyes. He turned away without a word and went into the house.

The two men watched Ruy Calidan's queer figure with his long arms dangling by his side until the door closed behind him.

"He doesn't know the harm he is doing you, Stephen," said Jacob Brevoort, "and if he did, I doubt whether it would make any difference to him. Suppose you do help him? With his violent disposition and his jealousy, you can't hope to achieve much. What about all the others over whom you will have lost your influence? Ah, Stephen, it is for your sake, for your sake alone, my boy, that I ask you to send Ruy Calidan away."

Stephen Lane smiled at him.

"I am sure it is for my sake," he replied seriously, "very sure—but the boy needs me. There is no one else, and I must help him if I can."

Then the two men shook hands and separated, Jacob Brevoort in sorrow, because of the harm that might come to Stephen.

There was one characteristic in Ruy Calidan's nature that Jacob Brevoort had only touched upon in passing. It was his almost insane jealousy of all who approached Stephen Lane on any terms of intimacy. Indeed, it went even further than this, for the boy seemed to know intuitively for whom Stephen held the slightest regard. Ruy could scarcely control himself at the sight of those for whom he believed Stephen had even the least friendliness. This very trait of Ruy's made it easier for Stephen. From the day he first found Ruy Calidan, Stephen could not bear to think of Dorothea having even to look upon a fellow-creature who was such an object of pity as

was this boy. Stephen Lane knew that this was wrong, for there was no need to tell him how Dorothea's tender heart would go out with its precious sympathy for this other being who was so unfortunate. The thought led Stephen to another which he tried to banish, not because it hurt him, but because he believed it wrong to even think it. Yet in spite of his determination, his own heart made him go over it again and again, relentlessly. In the time to come, it would be for Dorothea to give her gentleness and sweetness, all the love her heart could find, all that made her what she was, to someone who, Stephen feared, would not understand. So through the long years there would be nothing for Dorothea's heart to treasure, nothing to take the place of all she gave. What could be more cruel, more relentless, than such a fate? Despite his faith in God, Stephen had the unreasoning dread amounting, in his agony at the thought, to almost a certainty that just this awaited Dorothea. Stephen Lane pondered over this with no thought other than the wish to shield Dorothea, just as he wished now to shield her from even so slight a sorrow as her heart would find in knowing Ruy Calidan. Stephen wanted her never to know the passion and evil, the hatred and jealousy, the untamed, untrained, violent disposition that was bound up in Ruy Calidan. Just here the boy's peculiar dislike helped Stephen, for Ruy felt instinctively that of which Stephen did not even dream. So he made it easy for Stephen to keep him from coming in contact with Dorothea Brevoort.

In fact, Stephen Lane did not ask himself then,

why he felt this desire to shield Dorothea, or why there was happiness for him even in the thought of so doing. He knew well that the boy could not harm her and his reason told him that the heart of a good woman is not soiled by knowing of the evil there is, but that, because of knowing, it becomes more noble than before, its purity growing with the strength its knowledge gives it. Thus the woman's heart is transformed into all that she is destined to become. He could see Dorothea growing with the years into just the woman Stephen pictured she would be, and he knew that there was nothing that Ruy or he could do that would prevent Dorothea from being her brave, splendid self.

Stephen could not help wondering what Dorothea would do if she sought and failed to find in Alen Therwith all that she must find in someone to give her heart its happiness. Through years upon years, she and Alen might be together, yet there would never be a true companionship. So perhaps there might, after all, be unfulfilled the promise of the glorious womanhood Dorothea gave. Through being misunderstood, through lack of kindness and sympathy, she might fail to ripen into the full stature of nobility that was meant to be herself. Stephen Lane, the minister, could not even think that God would let such a thing come to pass.

Stephen Lane could never quite bring himself to let anyone know the story Ruy Calidan told him. He realised that by keeping it a secret, Ruy would feel more secure, happier. Stephen did not think of the control it gave him over the boy.

Sometimes Stephen was almost amused at the intense dislike the boy showed toward Alen Therwith. Often Stephen, watching, saw the boy's face change at the mere sight of Alen. All the passion and hatred of that queer, twisted spirit, was summed up and intensified in his glance. Yet Alen Therwith was always kind toward Ruy, more kind, Stephen thought, than he ever suspected Alen of being with anyone. Stephen made himself believe that Alen wanted to be kind to Ruy as part of the new duties he believed were his since joining the Moravian Church. Then, too, Stephen could not help thinking that perhaps Dorothea was in truth the one who, in this instance, at least, made Alen think of someone except himself.

There was at least one other house besides the white house on the Iron Hill in which there dwelt someone who looked for the light that burned each night in Stephen Lane's study. Always before she went to bed, Mary Blake stood close beside the window and looking out through the night, saw the lights in the Brevoort house and, further down the Iron Hill, the single light that she knew was Stephen Lane's. Mary's heart was troubled for these two friends of hers. There seemed to be nothing she could do for either of them, though had she but known it, she was doing for each of them more than even they guessed. Dorothea knew well what Mary's love meant to her. Over and over again she felt the warm sympathy that made her so sure of being always able to put out her hand and find Mary there beside her. Stephen Lane was not aware of much that Mary Blake saw. He well knew her generous acts and the kind heart that

prompted them, but because he did not think of himself, it never occurred to him that Mary Blake wanted to help him, not only for his own sake, but because she saw like a prophecy, that of which no one else dreamed—what it might all come to mean to Dorothea.

One night not long after Jacob Brevoort's conversation with Stephen, Mary was sitting in the Blake sitting-room, in the place that would have been her mother's, had she been spared to see her daughter grown to womanhood. As usual, Ralph Curtis was spending the evening with her.

"Ralph," said Mary, "someone is trying to hurt Stephen. Someone is telling false stories about Ruy Calidan in the hope that it will injure Stephen with people who, like my father, are opposed to having strangers brought here among us, of whom we know nothing, who may bring with them influences that are harmful. So many of the congregation want us to keep quite by ourselves in the mistaken hope of making ourselves good by shutting out everybody and everything."

"I must confess," replied Ralph, "that I also am one of those who don't see why Stephen brought him here. There is something queer about Ruy, something I don't like—that I can't explain."

"I have no doubt," said Mary, "that the wild things he is reported to do are exaggerated, yet I know there are many nights when Stephen goes out and finds Ruy and brings him back and talks with him and sits with him until it is morning, until he is quite himself again. Perhaps it is wrong, yet Stephen will

never come to believe that it is. I am so afraid it will take away Stephen's influence, or at least make some people misunderstand or mistrust him. I could not bear to have any of them doubt Stephen Lane."

"You need not worry about that, Mary," said Ralph. "There has never been anyone whom the congregation have loved as they do Stephen Lane."

Mary Blake did not reply. She let her sewing fall into her lap and, for a moment, her busy hands were idle. Throughout this broad land of ours, how many women are there upon whom in their younger years have fallen the responsibilities meant only for more mature hearts? Somehow they have learned to carry them with never a thought that the burden has come long before it was their proper share in life, or if such a thought has come, they have had the courage to put it from them.

So it was with Mary Blake. With all the strength that was in her she put away the longing for her share of good times and youthful pleasures, making her duties but give her a deeper insight into all that went on in her little world, and a clearer understanding of the things that were to make up life for her. Well, indeed, might Dorothea Brevoort find a friend in Mary. Well might Ralph Curtis come night after night to gain from Mary the self-reliance and strength of purpose that could give to his own spirit the courage that it lacked. Oh, that Stephen Lane might have come, too!—for it would have made it so much easier for him. None needed more than Stephen a friendly word to cheer him on his way, to make him know that there was more than silent approval from

the men and women of his congregation. But as yet, there was no one to tell him that they understood. Stephen Lane must go on alone, always alone, doing for others the very things that he himself had need of.

"We must help Stephen, Ralph," said Mary. "Although I have really seen but little of him since he became our minister, I feel as though I have known him always, as if we were good friends."

"Why, that is just the way I feel," said Ralph. "I never had to get acquainted with Stephen Lane at all, and you know how diffident I usually am with strangers, Mary. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to call him 'Stephen' from the very first, and he does think you are his friend, Mary. Often we talk of you—of you and the rest, I mean, when we are together. Only it is so strange," Ralph went on, "I think he doesn't like Dorothea at all. I have noticed whenever she is mentioned, he turns the conversation to something else or becomes silent. I can't see how anybody, especially a man like Stephen Lane, would not like Dorothea."

Mary Blake looked at Ralph. It was some minutes before she spoke. This was one of Ralph Curtis's traits that she loved most, this innocent way of measuring all whom he met. It told her so plainly of the good heart that was Ralph's, and her own rejoiced when she saw how Ralph had not even tried to read between the lines. Mary knew well that, next to herself, Ralph thought Dorothea the most wonderful person in all the world, and she understood perfectly his eagerness to have Stephen Lane think so too—that is, about Dorothea.

"I am quite sure you are mistaken, Ralph," she said, "if you think that Stephen Lane dislikes anybody. It isn't possible for him to do quite that. He always tries to find something good in everyone, and you know how easily he must have found it in Dorothea. He does find the good, and in so doing, makes it grow until it is all so much stronger than before, until the person in whom he has found it is better than he would have been had Stephen Lane never tried to show him Stephen's own confidence and belief in him. Why, even with Ruy, I can see a change."

Ralph Curtis shook his head.

"Perhaps you are right," he said. "I hope so. But there is something wrong about Ruy, something that Stephen can never hope to counteract. I wish he would not try. I wish he would send Ruy away before he does harm to Stephen."

"You forget," replied Mary, "how self-reliant Stephen is and how strong. Then you know, Stephen would never give him up if he once thought it his duty to try to help Ruy."

After a pause, Mary said:

"I can see no reason for anyone wanting to harm Stephen, or to do anything that might weaken his influence or the affection his congregation have toward him. Yet I feel that someone is doing just this. Can you think of anyone, Ralph, who would find it to their advantage to try to do such a thing?"

Ralph Curtis laughed and shook his head.

"You know, Mary, I am not much good in solving such puzzles. All I can ever do is to tell you what

happens and let you work out all the rest. Yet there is one thing I don't understand, and that is, why Alen Therwith, after all these years, has joined the church. Perhaps Dorothea wanted him to. That's the only reason I can think of."

Mary Blake shook her head decidedly.

"Dorothea did not want him to; that is, she did not care whether he did or not. Dorothea is another one who, like Stephen Lane, sees the good in everyone—in everyone, that is, except Alen. I think she despises him."

"Then why did he change so?" asked Ralph doubtfully. "And Dorothea has a queer way of showing it if she despises him. She is always with him, that is, whenever she goes anywheres. Then living in the same house with him——"

Mary smiled at Ralph.

"Men never understand things," she said. "How could a girl like Dorothea find anything to attract her in such a man as Alen Therwith?"

"Why," replied Ralph, "I thought they were just the kind women like, those strong, self-reliant fellows who do things. Sometimes," he said, dropping his voice a little, "sometimes I quite envy Alen because of all he's able to do, of so much more importance than anything I can ever do. I am afraid I'll never outgrow the shyness that must make it seem to everyone as if I lacked purpose, as if I did not understand myself at all. Sometimes I am so afraid, Mary, that you will think so too—that you will give me up as being quite worthless. But you won't do that, will you? Oh, I know you never will. If I am

to be made a man of at all, you are the only one who can do it, Mary."

Mary Blake shook her head, but she smiled a little.

"I can only help, Ralph," she said. "You will have to do it all yourself. Only you will know that I understand, that I am here always to help you."

As she spoke, she saw the doubt fade from his face, saw the Ralph she had loved since he was a boy there beside her again. They were to go together through life, these two, filling her heart and his with happiness, and making him the man he should be. But the time for these things was not yet, and she, with the patience that only a woman knows, was willing to wait until, in the end, it would all be fulfilled. It made her guess the need of her friendship that Dorothea Brevoort was just beginning to have. It made her feel, too, the strange, unseen force that was working to do Stephen Lane harm. And these two were dearer to her than any save her own kin and Ralph himself.

Mary did not tell Ralph she was certain that Dorothea was unhappy. Nevertheless she knew that something was disturbing Dorothea. Because Mary's home was so happy, because her own father was so kind, because Dorothea never hinted even remotely that Peter Brevoort was not as a father should be, Mary was altogether at a loss for any explanation of what was troubling her friend, unless, indeed, it was Stephen Lane himself. Even in those days and in so quiet a place as that, Mary Blake knew that there were men whose work filled their lives till there was room for nothing else. She saw the danger of putting all the body and mind and soul into a daily task,

till there was no time for the things that make lives richer and lift them out of their narrow rut. She could but wonder whether Stephen Lane was not in danger of doing just this. Her fears led Mary to believe that Stephen Lane, with all his work and responsibilities, which engrossed every waking moment, had given no thought to anything but work, and so found in Dorothea nothing more than such a friend as Mary herself was to him. Mary knew that Stephen had seen Dorothea even less than he had seen her. It was almost inconceivable, therefore, that Dorothea should have become less happy because of Stephen Lane. After all, she might be mistaken, yet there was no denying that Dorothea had lost much of her old gay spirits.

As for Dorothea's well-concealed dislike of Alen Therwith, Mary understood perfectly the reason for it, and she was not deceived by the appearance of friendliness that misled Ralph. Because the heart of a true woman tells her instinctively whom she can trust, Mary knew, as did Dorothea, that Alen Therwith was not one of these. But Mary did not guess how far Peter Brevoort's harshness led Dorothea to be kind to Alen, just as Alen himself, because of his conceit and selfishness, misunderstood these very things in Dorothea. It showed Dorothea Brevoort's true self, this struggle of her brave heart to bear its burden with a smiling face, to live a life apparently so bright that even one as near to it as was Mary Blake never guessed the heavy-heartedness that lay so close behind. It is just this that is the nobler part. To want sympathy, to need to be understood, to want

144 THE SONG OF THE PINES

help and comfort, yet not to ask; to be able to keep everyone from knowing, to bear the burden quite alone—perhaps in no other way did Dorothea Brevoort show more clearly what she was.

CHAPTER IX

THE ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS

IN those days, Red Lane was at the height of its beauty. Deep, cool shade, with here and there patches of sunlight that moved back and forth with the swaying of the branches, was but part of its charm. It was no wonder that those two met there. It had happened twice, quite by accident, of course. The third time neither of them appeared surprised.

On the first occasion, Dorothea saw Stephen approaching while she was still on the path that led from Mary Blake's house to Red Lane. Stephen stopped and stood with his hat in his hand, while they talked for a moment the little, commonplace, everyday things. Then Stephen went on his way again. Surely in itself it was the merest incident, yet a momentous one to both of them. Dorothea wondered at the happiness the moment gave her—how it seemed to change everything. Even Red Lane itself was more beautiful than before. Stephen did not tell of his thoughts as he went on down Red Lane toward the three great elms, toward the sea.

Nevertheless, the very next day, in almost the same place, these two met again. This time Stephen turned and walked a little way with her, back toward the Iron Hill. Dorothea asked him about his work, about the church. It was as delightful to her to have

the opportunity to ask as it was to Stephen to find Dorothea cared to know. To have her ask him thus of all he had to do, filled him with unspeakable joy. He was surprised at the eagerness of his own words and the satisfaction he found in telling Dorothea of the work. He never realised before, how he had wanted just this, how he had needed someone whose mind was as fresh and strong as was his own, who could understand, who could know what he was trying to accomplish and who could be more sure than he that he would not fail. Because of his loneliness, he needed just the assurance that would come from the confidence of someone else in him and in his work.

When at last, at the foot of the Iron Hill, Stephen left Dorothea, he resumed his walk with eyes that saw a brighter future than ever before, for his heart told him its joy in finding one who could know, who did know all he aspired to do and who made him feel that she was absolutely certain that the work would accomplish all that he hoped. More than this, she was sure that it was all good and worthy, and better still, she understood what it meant to him.

In the telling, Stephen found it not as though he were explaining for the first time things that must be justified, in which all that was to be gained by them must be pointed out as to one to whom it was all new and strange. Rather it was a repetition of familiar plans to one who knew well the obstacles which confronted him and the results that were to be attained. It was like verifying each plan, each hope, again, only this time so much more carefully because there were two now to check each step and make suc-

cess more certain. Thus this talk with Dorothea was but to bless his people, to make his work among them more helpful and their gain the greater. Stephen thought again of that first day he spent on Staten Island, when he stood beneath the apple-tree and looked down at the church and over all the land where he was to work. And now, to-day, in this very church that was his own, he had found one who brought all the distant plans, all that was to be done, that he had hoped for and feared for, immeasurably nearer. Indeed, it was certain now. He knew he could not fail, that Dorothea by her very sympathy and understanding, had made failure impossible. Only the day before, he had been telling himself that there was no way of making himself more certain of his ability to help others. Instead, as the years passed, he would be less sure that he was making the best use of himself, so that in the end, his duty would not be done fully—he would fall short of the high standard he had set.

A day, a week, came and went, but there were no more meetings in Red Lane between Dorothea Brevoort and the minister. Then came a great day, the greatest of them all.

This time Dorothea saw Stephen pass down the Lane while she was still some distance from it. When he saw her, he paused and turned back and so met her on the path.

“Good-afternoon,” he said, smiling down at her. “It is so beautiful to-day that I could not resist going as far as the beach.”

Dorothea smiled back at him.

148 THE SONG OF THE PINES

"I was just thinking," she replied, "that I never remember it to have been more beautiful. How I love all the land here, every hill and tree! But to-day it fairly outdoes itself. Just see the green of the trees along Red Lane, against the sky!"

Stephen turned and looked. Then his eyes sought the girl.

"I am glad you see all the beautiful things," he said. "So many of us are blind to them."

They walked slowly toward Red Lane. Stephen drew a deep breath.

"I like the salt in the air so," he said. "It is something I always missed at Bethlchem. Sometimes I have felt that I just must get one breath of sea air. This southeast wind brings it straight in to us."

They reached Red Lane and paused. Dorothea looked at Stephen.

"I am keeping you from your walk," she said. "If you had not stopped, you would have almost reached the beach by now."

Stephen looked down Red Lane and then at Dorothea.

"I was wondering," he said, hesitatingly, "if you would care to—if I might share my walk—if you——" He paused.

"I should like to go," said Dorothea.

"May I carry them for you?" said Stephen, indicating her schoolbooks.

"They are not heavy," replied Dorothea. But she gave them to Stephen, nevertheless.

They walked down Red Lane through the afternoon sunshine, Stephen's black clothes making a

sombre figure beside Dorothea's gown. Neither of them noticed that they had not spoken since Stephen took the books from Dorothea. Yet when they reached the beach and looked away to where sea and sky met, there was no need for words. It was quite enough to stand and gaze. At last, Dorothea turned away.

"Sometimes," she said simply, "it is almost more than I can bear, it is so beautiful. After all, I love the sea best. I am quite sure I should never be content away from it."

"Why, that is just the way I feel," said Stephen, "yet I imagined I was the only one who ever felt pain at the sight of the beauty of the sea. I was quite sure that such a feeling was a peculiarity of my own, for just that comes over me always when I get a glimpse of the sea. Sometimes I have thought that perhaps it was because I was alone too much."

"Surely," said Dorothea, "you see enough people never to feel lonely."

Stephen smiled.

"Yes," he said, "there are plenty of people, but somehow they don't understand; somehow I am always searching for one who would know what I meant if I spoke of the strange things I think about that are so real to me, so much a part of me."

"I know what you mean," replied Dorothea seriously. "Even with Mary I cannot talk of all these things. How hard it is to try to share one's confidence with another who does not understand."

"It would be impossible," said Stephen. "One could not do it. Often I have tried; often I have

wanted to show myself in the hope that it would make me of more use to my people. But it has always failed. It was as if I were doing something wrong, as if it were never meant that anyone should see or even guess, if they did not fully understand. I am afraid you will think I am very peculiar to talk in this way," he added apologetically.

Dorothea looked up at him.

"I did not know," she replied, "that there really was anyone except myself who felt that way about things. I can understand now how readily you have gained the confidence and respect of everyone here. It was this that has made it possible for you to come among us as a stranger and immediately become essential to everyone, so that they know the need of your help. It is just splendid. No man could do anything more worthy, for you are always using your influence for what you believe is right."

Stephen caught the serious tone in her voice. As for the words themselves, he did not know then how he would cherish them through the years to come. He looked away across the level land, turning so that he saw the hills and the white house. Then he looked back again at Dorothea. His face was grave and thoughtful.

"Yes," he said, "I know. Yet there is the responsibility. It is not in the least an easy matter to be wise, and sometimes I am very uncertain what I should tell them as to what they are to do. It is seldom simple or plain. These poor lives of ours have queer ways of getting confused and tangled."

"Yet it is just there," replied Dorothea, "that you

find your opportunity, not only to use your influence, but to make it gain in strength and grow and spread until there is none with whom you come in contact that is not made better for your trying—for you have the way of getting right at the heart of things, seeing clearly where others cannot.”

“How I wish you were right,” replied Stephen. “Often, just as now, I feel that I can help, that I will never fail anyone in even the least duty that is required of me. But sometimes—sometimes,” his voice dropped a little, “when it is night, when they have all gone home and I am just alone in my house, I get thinking. I ask myself who I am to have the courage to tell these people that they are to trust me, that they are to lean on me as they seem to be willing to do. Then for a little while, I am not just certain, just confident that I shall be strong enough. Perhaps,” he added lightly, “it is because I am not quite at home even yet. Sometimes I pretend that I am lonely. Perhaps I try to pity myself a little bit, which is quite wrong. I should be able to do all these things, to fill even the nights with work that is useful, that will help, for there are many who need it.”

“I have watched your light,” said Dorothea irrelevantly.

Neither of them noticed the pause that followed.

“Thank you,” he said at last, simply.

That day in Red Lane is now so long ago that it seems almost futile to spread upon these pages the words of those two journeying on together through their newly discovered land. Yet it may be that it is well that these things be told, for there still are men

and women wandering about quite by themselves, quite alone, for the lack of the only one who can understand, who can respond to all they feel, who can change the long hard way to one of new usefulness, of splendid achievement, of untold happiness. So, perhaps, some who read may find that they, too, will have a day in which the emptiness everywhere about them may be changed in an instant to all they have longed for. And if the secret self has always been striving for the best in everything, if it has always cherished the purity of its own heart, so the glory of the fulfilment will be the greater. It was just thus long ago with Stephen Lane. And if Providence deems it best that there shall always be but lonely days because the one who understands cannot be found, is it not better to have cherished this inner part of ourselves and kept it as our most precious possession, never forgetting that it is the better self? Surely this is the braver way.

Late that night Stephen Lane came out of his house and shutting the door quietly behind him, walked down the path to the road. Out in the broad King's Highway he paused for a moment, just there where the road leading down from the Iron Hill meets the older road. Standing there in the starlight, he turned and looked at his church, then up the hill to the white house, then across the level ground and past the trees of Red Lane toward the sea. After a moment, he walked on down Red Lane, continuing till he reached the highest part of the woods. There had been a shower since Dorothea and he walked there that afternoon. Now it was cool and dark and



A night in the Brevoort household.

damp. The rain still dripped from the leaves and the odour of wet wood came to him. The whole night was sweet with the fragrance that comes when the countryside lies wet and still in the quiet that follows a summer shower. There still came the reflection of the storm's lightning, now but a dull glow in the clouds. Everywhere was quiet. The man's mind, filled as it was with thoughts that stirred and throbbed and surged was brought back to the sanity and reasonableness that always marked him, by this peace, this hush that had fallen over the land.

Stephen walked more slowly now, carrying his hat in his hand, that he might feel the cool wind against his forehead. He could barely see his way amid the darkness of the trees. Once he stopped to listen. He could detect absolutely no sound. He rejoiced at the quiet and at the opportunity of being alone, yet he knew he was not alone and he knew, too, that he never would be again. Always there beside him he would find the one who could understand. No matter where he might be or what might happen, he could always talk with her, always tell her every thought, every hope, every doubt his heart knew. Even though in reality he should not see her or hear her dear voice again—it would still be the same—she would understand. Stephen knew that all this was something more than fancy. It was all absolutely real to him, and more than that, he knew that with each passing day he would in truth, share more and more with Dorothea, even though he never spoke to her of these things. Stephen did not ask himself why this was true. He was only glad that it was true, rejoicing

because his self had found this other self. Thereafter, there would be no such thing as the long, solitary days of work with people among whom there had never been one voice to answer that of his own heart. Yet now, that very day, there had come to him across the endless space of loneliness through which he had been wandering, the voice he had listened for always until then, in vain. He knew now that for all the time to come he should hear it and find her there close beside him, sharing all he knew himself really to be, lifting him up, always up, until at last he should be as God intended him to be. There in Red Lane under the trees, under the stars, Stephen stood bareheaded, looking up through the leaves, into the sky. There was no thought now other than of thankfulness for this day that had brought him the one who could understand.

CHAPTER X

THE PARTY

OVER Staten Island there lay a deep blanket of snow. It was a February night, and the moonlight flooded hill and valley with the brightness of day. The quiet air was bitterly cold. On such a night one likes to travel in imagination across the broad white land and among the bare trees of the woods, past the cheerful lights in the houses, past churches, silent and deserted. So the lonely miles stretch away, on and on, over the frozen snow in the moonlight.

The moon was high when a great sleigh passed down the Iron Hill and out along the King's Highway. Alen Therwith was the driver, with Ralph beside him and Dorothea and Mary bundled up out of all resemblance to their true selves on the back seat. Merry indeed, sounded the sleigh bells in the crisp air. On they went, mile after mile to the south in the broad moonlight. Other sleighs with their loads of merrymakers passed along the Highway, with now and then a more quiet one where the older folk were riding in silence because they had only the memory of other nights such as that to make them know that once they were merry, too.

The Brevoort sleigh drove past the fork of the Amboy and Richmond Roads, where the Sign of the Rose and Crown stood, till even the warm blur of

lights on the frosted windows of the Sign of the Ship were left behind. Dorothea did not speak during the whole drive. Mary Blake understood her friend's mood, for the beauty of the night made one who loved it silent indeed, silent and thankful because God had made it so wonderful. Mary herself was glad to miss none of it. She felt, too, the joy of living. The rapid movement of the sleigh through the cold air made the blood in her veins tingle. Not so with Alen Therwith, for he was making an evident effort to put from him the years that had made him old. So he chatted with Ralph like a boy on a holiday.

Often in the pages of fiction are descriptions of houses in whose spacious halls are gathered for the dance gentlemen and ladies in their fine attire, bringing with them the courtly manners of some bygone time to dignify the scene and to delight the imagination. Or sometimes there is pictured a broad verandah and swinging lanterns—an old garden where the moonlight mingles with dainty gowns and sweet faces, and from within the house comes the sound of dancing feet and low, plaintive music to cast its enchantment over the beauty of the scene. Yet in truth, the spirit of all of this is to be found to this day, and it may be that there is added now a purity, that raises more homely scenes to an honest dignity, that was not found in the splendour of old. So it was that night long ago on Staten Island, when the moonlight was over everything.

A great farmhouse near the southern end of the Island was bright and warm and filled with merry

people who were young and happy ones who were old, and better still, they were good people, rough or uncouth or ludicrous though they might seem. Ruddy cheeks and clear bright eyes and the poise and grace that comes only with health, marked most of them. Deep-chested, strong men, who were as straight and well-proportioned as the women, if more clumsy, filled the low-ceilinged rooms. In one corner sat an old darkey whose grey hairs were in fine contrast to his ebony face. A fiddle was clasped in his great rough hand, and as he drew the bow across the strings, his foot kept time and his head rolled back and forth to the rhythm of the music, while his eyes blinked like a great owl. He was a famous fiddler, come late that afternoon from New Jersey, over the frozen Kills, where the Blazing Star Ferry used to be, to this farm house. For miles about, he was better known than many a white man of more prosperous calling. No festivity was complete without him, for none could make such music as he. The tunes he played were old melodies, now lost forever, unless, indeed, they linger in some man's memory.

Even as long ago as that night, they were beginning to be accustomed to the New World habit of people from all corners of the earth gathering and mingling together. Thus the French and Dutch names were to be found together that night just as they are to-day in that very part of Staten Island. Nor was there anything inharmonious in their companionship. Many of Stephen Lane's congregation were there, and among the late arrivals were Peter Brevoort and his brother.

No one guessed how it hurt Dorothea to look in vain for Stephen wherever she went. It made his world and hers seem so very far apart, and as if, too, there were to be for her all the good times, the merry, happy times, and for Stephen only work and anxiety over those who needed his help, always. Nor could Dorothea bear to think that perhaps, after all, Stephen did find that his efforts to help others were not enough to keep from him the feeling of loneliness and isolation, the sense of being cut off from sharing all that might otherwise have been rightly his, by his responsibilities and his unselfishness. It was not until long afterward that Dorothea was to know how near the truth her thought that night was. In spite of himself, Stephen Lane did find that he wanted to be part of all the life about him, a part that he could not be because all that he found he must do to be unselfish, left no room for anything else.

Dorothea Brevoort looked about her through the crowded rooms and compared the men she saw with Stephen Lane. Dorothea was quite fair. Many of those she saw she knew to be good men, but they were not Stephen, nor were they like him. She well knew that Alen's determination and his self-confidence were as strong as Stephen's. In Ralph Curtis she saw much of Stephen's gentler side. Yet neither Alen nor Ralph had Stephen's control over others and over himself. Above all, it was Stephen Lane's seriousness of purpose that made Dorothea so sure that he was to be trusted, that he would never fail in being true to the high purpose to which his life was given. How little Dorothea knew of the time that was to

come, and of all from which Stephen Lane was to save her, with no thought other than that it was for her happiness.

That night, as always, the festivities opened with that most formal feature, the grand march. Led by the older ones, the rest in couples marched in and out, up and down, through all the rooms. Among them, there was one man whose character found expression in his dress and movements. The outlines of Peter Brevoort's figure, as he marched with the others that night, showed the certain complacency, the self-satisfaction that marked him so strongly. The strange clothes belonging to another land, indicated the unreasonableness, the insistence upon having his own way. Nor was his face one that was not good. It was rather that the better part of his nature had not developed, but remained dormant, while selfishness and stubbornness hid the kindlier side, till there seemed to be none.

When the march was over, he sat, as was characteristic, in the seat where most could be seen. For once, his hat was removed and hung outside in the hall. Even Peter Brevoort caught some measure of the young people's merriment, for at times he laughed with the rest, calling now and then to certain of the dancers some rough jest or bit of sarcasm. To attract Alen Therwith's attention appeared to be one of his favourite pastimes. At least he called to Alen most often. In truth, it was something he liked to do. He wanted everyone to know that he and this great, strong man, this successful man, were like father and son. He wanted to attract the attention of others to

Alen Therwith, and it would have been strange indeed for a man such as Peter Brevoort not to be proud of Alen. All that the boy had promised of strength and vigour of manhood, of a strong mind and strong hands to fill its commands, could be seen in Alen that night. No wonder he was quite in authority in his masterful way among all those other men. Yet it was strange that Peter Brevoort had no word or thought for the slender young figure that most of the time sat close beside him, a figure that drew Alen to it over and over again. Alen urged Dorothea to dance with him. Peter Brevoort, however, appeared to assume that Alen could expect nothing but a refusal from one so unwilling to take her place. Yet he took particular pains that she should see that he was more ashamed of her even than before.

Those who knew Dorothea Brevoort have said that she was without equal; that God had made her not only fair to look upon, but had crowned her with the greatest blessing that can be man's or woman's, a pure, unselfish heart. No wonder Alen Therwith's eyes followed her so jealously—incomparable Dorothea.

Simplicity makes real so much that is lovable. Applied to Dorothea, it indicated that her heart cast aside as unworthy all that led her from pure living and thinking and doing. Warm, eager, filled with generous impulses, she could only use herself for good, as God wanted her to.

Many were the friendly glances of those who watched Dorothea. They were good people, and

they knew her and loved her for what she was. Dorothea returned their glances with a smiling face. So it was that none detected the wistful look that the dear eyes had as they searched always for someone who was not there. Yet if it were necessary that Dorothea should always search thus in vain for Stephen, it may also have been true that he in turn found it hard not to share these very things that were properly part of his youth, which, when it had slipped away from him, would take all this light-heartedness with it forever. Thus to both of them, such a night brought its burden. So it was that not even Mary Blake guessed that Dorothea was not as light and happy as the rest.

A little later there was a group standing in one corner watching the dancers who were not hurrying as in such a scene to-day, but moving slowly in queer and now forgotten figures. Peter Brevoort and Dorothea, with Mary and Alen beside them, watched it all and listened to the scraping notes of the fiddle above the sound of the dancing. Perhaps there are those who have missed being part of so honest and homely a scene as this. If such there be, they are to be pitied for the emptiness of their lives, for the loneliness that must be theirs because they have never shared the mirth and the brightness and the innocence that comes with the sound of merry voices and music made for dancing feet.

"Dorothea," said Alen, "you must dance with me. You have not danced once to-night."

"Thank you," she replied, "but I would rather not. You see, as mother could not come, I want to

try to take her place." Her hand touched her father's arm lightly.

But Alen Therwith was not to be thus denied.

"You must," he said, and the tone rather than the words, caused the colour to come into Dorothea's face. Yet she did not speak, nor show that she resented either his words or his manner of speaking them.

Peter Brevoort turned toward her.

"What's this?" he demanded sharply. "Why aren't you like the rest? Why are you so queer as to sit here when all the others are dancing?"

Dorothea turned toward Alen.

"I'll dance with you," she said simply.

Alen Therwith led her to the other end of the room. He wanted everyone to see that he was the only favoured one that night. How good it is to know that Dorothea's innocent heart was spared the pain of realising why he did it, or knowing that the others saw and interpreted it just as Alen wanted them to—making it confirm all the little impressions, the opportunities for which he was so careful should never be lost. So that night they saw, as Alen wanted they should, that he was the chosen one. And because they loved Dorothea, they looked upon it and were glad for her sake. Nor in their honest way had they any thought other than it was all as Dorothea wished.

When the dance ended, Alen did not take Dorothea back to her father. Instead, he led her into the hall where, at the foot of the stairway, a long bench, that in these days would be piled high with cushions, stood bare and uninviting.

"Let's sit down here, Dorothea," he said.

Just at that moment, it mattered very little to Dorothea where she sat. Here at least she would escape her father's sharp words, and besides, it was easier to keep Alen Therwith at a distance when her father was not there. When they were seated, Alen for once endeavoured to make himself entertaining. It was strange to see this man trying so hard to please. Dorothea was ashamed of herself as she saw his evident effort to put her at her ease.

"Perhaps this is a strange time to speak of it, Dorothea," said Alen, "but I feel quite different to-night, quite—I don't know just how to say it. I think I must be a little bit better than I was before."

"You mean," said Dorothea, "about the church? Because you have joined it?"

Alen Therwith nodded his head.

"I think perhaps it's that in part," he said, "but I believe it's mostly because of the things that Stephen Lane says, the things he preaches about."

The light in the hall shone full upon Dorothea's face. Alen Therwith purposely sat where he could watch her. But Alen was disappointed. He hoped by speaking thus to throw Dorothea off her guard.

He felt that his words had quite disarmed Dorothea, yet because she made no reply, Alen went on:

"I am just beginning to understand the kind of man Stephen Lane is. I wish that I could be like him."

Dorothea listened more eagerly now than was usual. Alen hoped by speaking thus of Stephen—but his inability to understand unselfishness made it

impossible for him to guess that Dorothea's only thought was to try to find the way in which she could aid Stephen in his effort to help Alen. She did not guess that Alen was misleading her. Dorothea was intent only upon trying to help Stephen. It was all for Stephen's sake, for the good he was trying to do. Now that she had the opportunity of helping, she would not fail. Oh, how she rejoiced that the chance had come to help Stephen. There was no thought of Alen Therwith in it at all.

"You must know him very much better than I do," said Alen. "I want to be sure that he lives up to all he wants others to do. You know it is hard enough for me to follow where another points out the way under any circumstances."

Dorothea looked at Alen.

"You may be sure," she replied, "that he demands of himself more than he does of anyone else."

Alen Therwith noticed the indifference in her tone. He tried another tack.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "Stephen Lane is only a man such as the rest of us, and it is to be expected that if someone could know everything he does, we would not find that he was any better."

But Dorothea's confidence was such that she had no thought, as Alen hoped she would, of defending Stephen. She was quite content in believing that Stephen Lane would never fail in any test to which he might be put. She was beginning to feel a little resentment toward Alen Therwith for speaking thus, for she realised that he was suggesting that she had some special interest in Stephen Lane or his welfare.

It was because she had that she was quite able to conceal it.

"The minister," she replied, "like the rest of us, will probably have to stand or fall by his own acts. What the minister does cannot affect our own responsibilities very much, one way or the other."

Dorothea's indifference misled Alen completely, keen though he was. Had he been as calm and cautious as usual, it is possible that he would have read Dorothea aright. But always his own eagerness blinded him, for the girl's mere presence roused his desire to make her his till he was no longer capable of judging her accurately. Even as they talked, he was looking at her clear-cut profile and her well-poised head—her sense of what she was. No thought came to his mind as he watched her, that this woman, because of her purity and tenderness, because her heart was so good, was therefore but the more to be shielded and treasured. Instead, the very sweetness of her presence made him only the more eager that she should be his own.

From the very first, this attraction for Dorothea took possession of him as had nothing else in all his life. It had grown till it blotted out everything else. Quite alone with her there in the hall while the others danced—when for the moment Dorothea did not seem as distant toward him, he told himself over and over again that she should be his, whatever the cost. He was near enough to Dorothea to watch her soft breath come and go, to see the long lashes that touched her cheek. There was no price too great to pay, nor did it matter in what way he might succeed.

None would plan more carefully or cunningly than he—none wait with greater patience. The thoughts surged through his brain till he felt his own breath coming faster and faster as he watched her. Happy Dorothea, not knowing how near evil came to touching her that night. It was well, too, that Stephen did not know fully how surely Alen was planning to weave about Dorothea a net from which she would find no means of escape.

At last, Alen Therwith said, "Let us go back to your father, Dorothea."

Apparently Dorothea did not hear him, yet she rose when he did and entered the room again. It was late now. Some of the merry-makers were gone and others preparing to leave. They found but few in the larger room, besides Peter Brevoort and Mary and Ralph. Those who still were there were the more boisterous spirits for whom the evening's fun had but just begun, and who were now eager for anything. The sight of Alen Therwith (whom they recognised as their leader), filled them with joy and they promptly seized upon him. It was just this portion of the evening that Mary Blake and Dorothea desired to avoid. They both felt a strong sense of shame as they watched certain of the other young women joining eagerly in the ruder games—all so different from the honest merriment that had been provided for their entertainment earlier in the evening. Yet their refusal was quite likely to be misunderstood. Both of them had often to bear just this before, yet to-night it was to be much harder for one of them, at least.

Alen Therwith seized Dorothea's arm.

"Come," he cried, "you are just the one we need."

Dorothea quickly released herself from his grasp.

"I don't care to," she replied quietly, and went over to where her father was standing.

It was an unfortunate move. Peter Brevoort had witnessed all that happened, and when Dorothea stood beside him, he turned upon her.

"Aren't you ashamed," he said in a loud voice. "Anyone would think you were trying to be better than the rest. Stephen Lane is not here to watch you, so you might just as well have a good time."

A remark at once so unkind and uncalled for would have been hard enough to bear under any circumstances, but before all these people—— Yet Dorothea could hide the pain.

"I prefer not to," she said quietly. "I am ready to go home," and she slipped her arm through Mary's. "Let us get ready," she added. Nor was there even a tremor in her voice.

The rest stopped their merry-making when Peter Brevoort began to speak. An awkward pause followed Dorothea's words, yet they were all ashamed and sorry at the heartlessness of the incident, all except Peter and Alen Therwith. Dorothea could comfort herself that night with the knowledge that the rest would at least shield her so that none else would know of her father's harshness. Yet she could not help noticing, as she turned to go, Ralph Curtis's indignant face. Perhaps, after all, Stephen Lane would come to know of it.

The great sleigh held a silent party on its home-

ward journey. Alen Therwith was keen enough through fear of injuring himself with Dorothea, not to refer even remotely to any of the evening's happenings.

The moon was hanging low in the west. Everywhere was the sense of lateness, the indefinable something that tells that the night is far gone. It was over all the land as they passed the church at the foot of the Iron Hill. Alen pulled the horses to a walk as they began to mount the steep ascent. The lengthening shadows from the moonlight made the church seem more dark and empty even than before. The cold, too, was more bitter.

Dorothea looked at the little house beside the church. It also, was dark. At least she could comfort herself with the knowledge that Stephen Lane was no longer at work. Dorothea wondered how many hours of the day Stephen was willing to give to his work. There were few, indeed, as far as she could discover, that he used for rest. Yet to-night, now, his day must be ended.

She looked intently at the little house, dark and uninviting. What a little house it was, to be sure, yet big enough when a man must live there alone. Dorothea found herself wishing that without Stephen's knowing it, she might slip in unobserved, and, with the magic of a woman's touch, take from it the cheerless aspect and then slip away again, leaving it transformed. Dorothea wondered if Stephen knew that he was lonely.

They were quite past the house now, yet Dorothea turned and looked back again. As she did so, the

door opened and she heard the sound of footsteps on the frozen boards of the porch that cracked and creaked in the cold and stillness. There were two men coming out of the house and one of them had a lantern, which he raised while the other stopped to lock the door. Dorothea recognised them both. The man with the lantern lived five or six miles down the very road they had come, in a little, lonely farmhouse on the edge of the woods. The other was Stephen Lane. As the sleigh turned into the driveway of the white house on the Iron Hill, Dorothea, looking back down the slope, saw a little dot of light go bobbing slowly along the King's Highway. Dorothea's eyes were dim as she watched it.

Stephen Lane saw the sleigh as he stepped out on his porch, and he guessed its occupants. His hand shook as he fitted the key into the lock of the door of the little house.

"It's cold to-night," said his companion.

Stephen Lane nodded.

Then the two marched away down the road with the lantern swinging between them.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH ALEN DECEIVES STEPHEN

THE lamplight in Stephen Lane's study fell strongly on two faces as different as was the manhood of each. Alen Therwith and the minister talked far into the long December night. At first it was about trivial matters, but Stephen saw that Alen Therwith had come with a purpose, and he could not help wondering what it was. Often since that Saint Nicholas' Eve, more than twelve months before, Stephen had battled with himself that he might be just with Alen Therwith. Oftentimes, horror at himself, at the evil that was in him, that made him almost hate Alen, overcame Stephen till he turned in loathing from himself. He, Stephen Lane, the minister, the man of God, chosen because of his qualifications to teach the good to other men—it was shameful. So he struggled with himself and, in the end, gained the mastery.

Stephen thought of all this as he sat watching his companion while the latter talked. A man's face is but a mask behind which he hides his real self. Stephen was thankful that he was strong enough not to show Alen Therwith what sort of a man the minister had become. Alen, in his turn, was highly elated when he saw how skilfully he was deceiving Stephen. With the years he had learned even more than his

boyhood promised of ability to handle men, to mould them to do his bidding. Moreover, Alen Therwith had learned that the same methods cannot be used with different people. He knew now when to force the issue and when to accomplish his purpose by processes so subtle and devious that the deceit practised was never known to its victim. Besides, he could calculate so accurately what another would do under a given state of facts that he could create those circumstances with the absolute assurance that they would of necessity bring about the desired results. This was genius. Yet it was unfortunate that the genius could not have been used less selfishly.

When men were created, some weaker and some stronger; when the talents and possibilities were mingled in strange proportion so that one man was another's master, the burden of responsibility of each individual was made to vary, too. Nor has this burden seemed to vary fairly or justly. But rather, arbitrarily, leaving the wise and kind and good to be seen struggling alone with their own and another's burden, and that other always one too selfish or too weak to bear it for himself. So it was with Stephen Lane and Alen Therwith. Yet in this instance, the burden was greater, for Alen imposed it on Stephen merely for Alen's own selfish ends, to secure a further measure of gratification. Had this been pointed out to Stephen, he would only have replied that God's ways are not always for men to understand, and that in this as in all things, we must have faith to believe.

For long months, Alen Therwith had planned this very scene. Again and again he had gone over the

words he would use, calculating with infinite care just their effect upon Stephen Lane, and what they would cause him to reply. Alen rehearsed it all until his own part was letter-perfect. He believed that he judged the character and the processes of Stephen Lane's mind and heart so unerringly that Alen was certain he could foretell exactly what response the minister would make to his words. The amount of labour involved in this was simply appalling. Alen admitted it to himself. Yet was it not worth it? Was he not playing for high stakes?

That night neither man forgot his part. Alen Therwith spoke the words just as he had planned them, and Stephen Lane, because he was true to himself, responded in just the manner Alen anticipated. Yet in spite of his acuteness, there was a force at work in this, as in all things, that even Alen's shrewd judgment could not completely reckon with or be certain of, no matter how carefully he planned. In his efforts to be fair toward Alen, Stephen Lane was conscious of this very force and his faith was so complete that he was not conscious of any hidden danger in rendering Alen such service as he could.

"Since I joined your church," began Alen, "I have found myself needing more guidance even than before. Ever since I was a boy, (it is easier to tell you this because you are a young man yourself) I have been so confident." He wanted to say that Stephen Lane's preaching had taught him this, but Alen was too wise to try to flatter Stephen. "For a long time," he went on, "I have had a secret to keep, but recent events have made it so that I can now come

to you, seeking the advice and help I need, to have you point out to me what the Father of both of us would have me do."

Stephen leaned back in his chair. His little study had witnessed many such scenes as this. As he looked about him that night, the old thought rose again in Stephen's mind—how strange it was that men and women came to one as young as he, asking help with those secret sorrows each must carry.

"I suppose," Alen Therwith went on, "that you have never heard much about me. I don't want to go into that, except to tell you that when I first came here I had no home, or anything, in fact, but the clothes on my back. Peter Brevoort, kind man that he is, took me in and gave me a home and made it possible for me to become the man you know me to be. He has been a father to me; yes, more than that."

Alen Therwith paused as though the recollection moved him deeply.

"I know," said Stephen gently.

After a pause, Alen continued:

"In return I have tried to be a son to him. Through my efforts, a prosperity he never dreamed of has come to him and to his family. I have endeavoured to take the place of a son in the household, and surely no one ever had a more kind father and mother than I have found in Peter Brevoort and his wife. Then, too, I have tried to be a brother to Dorothea. As the years have passed, I have found that they depend upon me more than I had ever dared to hope they would, until, now that Peter Brevoort has begun to fail in health with his growing age, I have

assumed the responsibility for everything. But time has left its mark on me, and I too, am not as young as I once was."

It was evident to Stephen that his companion expected him to say something.

"Surely you do not consider yourself old?" he asked.

"I am forty," replied Alen.

"Not very old yet," said Stephen, smiling.

"Yet far too old, I'm afraid," replied Alen, gravely. Then he said in a different tone:

"You cannot guess all it means to me to be able to ask your advice about this matter. It is one that is far too delicate for me to think of mentioning to anyone else, and we can rely upon your judgment and discretion."

It was as near flattery as Alen Therwith dared to go. But Stephen did not heed it.

"I have tried to show Dorothea the respect of an older brother," said Alen, "endeavouring to make up to her in part all that she has lost in not having a brother of her own. I have watched her grow to womanhood, watched her reach the time where I could hope that she would marry happily a good man who would care for her and be kind to her always."

Stephen looked at Alen Therwith steadily. For a moment something in his glance almost disconcerted the latter. But Alen did not forget his words.

"But of late I have discovered," he continued, "that she has developed toward me a feeling that is far from sisterly. An affection has grown up unsuspected by either of us. And now she is no longer

able to conceal it from me, though I know she has tried, like the brave girl she is."

Alen paused.

"Is that all?" asked Stephen slowly.

"No," replied Alen, "that is not all. I must confess to you that Dorothea is but returning an affection I have had for her since I first knew her. But I flatter myself I have kept everyone from even suspecting it. It is because she now knows of it that we are in this quandary. It was Dorothea's suggestion that I come here to talk with you, for she felt that you could be trusted to keep our secret, if it must be kept, forever, if need be, depending on the advice that you give us to-night. Dorothea and I have promised each other to abide by your judgment and to follow it implicitly."

It was because Stephen Lane had turned so that the lamplight fell full upon his face that Alen could watch his features unobserved. He saw that he had guessed aright, and that he had not come a moment too soon.

"It was her suggestion that you come?" asked Stephen.

Alen Therwith smiled at the pronoun.

"Yes," he replied, "Dorothea knew how well we could trust you."

Stephen rose and walked across the little room and back again before he spoke.

"I see," he said steadily. "I understand. It is because she is very young and you so much older, and you are not sure just what is best, and the responsibility——" He paused.

1

Alen was quite ready.

"That is right," he said, "the responsibility. If we were to marry and there were children, you know, with a father who is so old——"

Stephen seated himself again.

"I see that you have talked it all over together," he said, "and it is wise that you should. It is well to look into the future in just this way. So few people do, when they think of marrying. They do not realise the wrong and the suffering and the sorrow they bring into the world when they cause to be born children who are not strong and healthy and sound in mind and body, because of their parents."

"I am glad," replied Alen, "that you think we have been careful, that we have talked it all over since—since we found out. Dorothea will be happy."

For a while neither spoke. Stephen was trying to find his words, and the other man, because of his own satisfaction, because the parts had been played as the master hand planned they should, was content to sit and wait.

At last Stephen turned to Alen and smiled before he spoke—the smile of the unselfish, the most wonderful of all.

"It is right," he said, "it is quite right. It is just as God himself must want it to be. The disparity in your ages will make but little difference if you care for each other, if you are congenial. As for the rest, you are sound in body and have kept yourself young with outdoor work. There is no danger that a child of yours should not be equally strong and sound. I

should certainly urge you to marry when—when you are ready.”

Again there was a pause, each man apparently being absorbed in his own thoughts. At last Alen Therwith rose and, crossing the room, held out his hand.

“Thank you,” he said, shaking Stephen’s hand, “thank you for Dorothea as well as for myself. You have set at rest a great burden for both of us, something that has distressed us and made us anxious for a long time. But there is one thing more of which I must speak. You know Dorothea’s father is far from being as vigorous or in as good health as formerly. Dorothea does not wish to distress him in the least about our affairs, about losing his daughter or anything of that kind, until he is quite himself again and she can be certain that it will not harm him. We have agreed to say nothing of these matters to him or to anyone, until he has quite regained his strength. We are told it will be but a short time, and Dorothea feels it her duty to be with him and to spare him all such thoughts as that he might lose her care and attention at this time. At most, he will have fully recovered in a few months. But even if it is a year or more, you know we must learn to wait where it is our duty to do so.”

“Yes, where it is our duty to do so,” repeated Stephen.

“Dorothea and I were anxious to explain this point to you,” said Alen, “so that as time passes, you will understand why you hear nothing more of it. Of course you know Dorothea will not care to men-

tion it even to you. Yet it will be hard to wait," he added.

"I understand," said Stephen. "I will remember."

Then the two men told each other good-night, and Alen Therwith took himself home exultingly.

Another day had almost ended. Twilight found a motionless figure on the low dunes by the sea. Along the beach there was no sign of life other than this solitary man and the seabirds. Yet when Nature in its quieter mood has spread across the sky and the sea the soft, warm colours of evening, and when everywhere is tranquillity, a man cannot look upon it all with unseeing eyes and find no comfort in it and be no part of it. This lonely man, looking upon it all, strove with the strength that made him a man, to cast out the bitterness and to trust again as simply as a little child in the things of God; to stop the endless struggle of human judgment against the Will of the Father in Heaven.

At last the man turned. To his left the glories of the sunset lay across the sky, the brighter where its golden edges bent low over the earth till they touched the dark hills and spread out over the valley between, filling it with a soft light. Something of its softness touched the man too, for he raised his bared head and gazed straight up. His lips moved, though they framed no words. What words can there be when the heart of a man cries for help in its struggle with a burden almost more than it can bear? If it were a prayer, would it not be for comfort for someone else?

Would it not be that some other one would be spared the great longing, the hopelessness? Now the light had faded from the western sky and the hills themselves were darker, and over Red Lane was the deep hush of twilight. The man's eyes sought the steeple of his church, still outlined against the sunset sky. There lay his work and his duty. At the sight came strength and comfort—strength to be a man always, a Knight of the Round Table, in all that was unselfish and noble. And he would find comfort, too, in knowing through the passing years that all that was come to him had but made his purpose the higher and his strength the greater, and this should be true even though the woman who inspired it should never know. There was no other way than that each moment of his life should be lived as though her eyes were there to see and her heart to understand.

CHAPTER XII

SUNDAY MORNING

THE sunlight of a winter morning struggled in through the shutters of the room in the white house on the Iron Hill where Dorothea and Mary were sleeping. Far back in the darkness of the night, Mary felt Dorothea move nearer to her as though, perhaps, some dream made her seek the protection of her friend. Mary's strong, warm arms had gathered Dorothea closer to her motherly bosom. Morning found them still thus—Dorothea in her friend's arms. Oh, that there might never be a time, even in sleep, when one can find loneliness with none to comfort, none to bring the sense of safety that is sometimes as much needed in dreams as in realities.

There is that about a Sunday which makes it different, sets it apart from other days. Thus that morning there was a Sabbath peace and quiet in the Brevoort household. When Dorothea wakened, she was quite willing to lie still. Her eyes were soft with dreams and her mind content to wander through the uncertain land of half-awake. Dorothea found herself thinking that she was glad about something, though for a moment she was not quite sure what it was. While she was wondering, Mary stirred in her sleep. Dorothea watched her, but she did not wake. Dorothea knew now why she was glad and why she

wanted these few precious moments, this little time all to herself. The quiet moments are always the best in life if the heart puts into them worthy thoughts and hopes, dreams that are dear, longings that are unselfish. Thus it was that long-gone Sabbath morning. And thus did Dorothea find the quiet time sweeter and more comforting than any she had known before.

Over and over again, Dorothea's heart said to her: "To-day is Sunday!" Dorothea frowned just a little at her heart and replied that for her own part, she did not care if it were Sunday. Then her heart said: "It will soon be time to go to church!" Dorothea listened and said nothing. She did not want her heart to stop talking just there. Then, because her heart was a good heart and because there had wakened in it a new tenderness more shy and timid than Dorothea herself, it whispered to her of a wonderful happiness so sweet that Dorothea dared not believe it could be true. Yet she liked to listen. Surely there could be no harm in that. But the voice went on and on toward greater happiness with each new thought. Her heart knew that the happiness was more than a daydream. As for Dorothea herself, she was not surprised at all. It seemed quite right and natural that this happiness that was to be her life should come to her, only she was afraid that someone would find out, afraid that someone would see, and the time was not yet.

The thought that in some remote way, Stephen might come to know, filled her with untold terror that Sunday morning. That there would come a

time when she would want him to know, when she must have him know, seemed then quite impossible. Thus began the awakening of Dorothea Brevoort. It was indeed like being born into a new world. Then because with happiness there must always come sadness, if the happiness be worth its name, there came a thought that hurt her as none had ever before. For an instant she realised what all this meant to her. Then her mind went on down through the years, only to be confronted on every hand with what she would be told was her duty. Clearly there was expected of her that which would make her heart's happiness impossible. Yet that morning, youth and the hope that had been born with the new happiness would not be denied. They would live in sunshine for that hour, at least, for that quiet hour when Dorothea was quite alone with her heart. And the heart was still speaking to her. "You will hear him for a whole hour!" it said. Dorothea coloured. A whole hour! What a little space that is in all the time this old world has seen! But in the world where the real selves live, time is not measured by the hands of a clock. Let us thank God that this is so. If it were not, there would be no time in the life of a man or woman for happiness. So Dorothea rejoiced that morning because she lost all measure of time and things. So she dreamed of the happiness which the day would bring to her, just because she would sit in the church at the foot of the Iron Hill and listen to the voice of Stephen Lane.

Because heart and mind were alike simple and natural, Dorothea had progressed no further than to

know the real meaning of the new happiness she had found. There was no thought, as yet, of anything beyond, of any fulfilment, or of loneliness if the years were to be long and empty. Dorothea was simply glad to be alone for a little while with the day-dreams that were all sunshine. They were sweet, those dreams of young womanhood, but they led to something sweeter and more tender and true, for they brought Dorothea's woman's heart to the full knowledge of a man's heart, just as God planned it in the beginning.

It is well that the heart is not called upon to demonstrate by logical reasoning the causes of its affection. God puts into the heart what He will. That this part of Himself shall not be used for anything that is unworthy is what He requires of each one of us. Dorothea herself could not have explained just how this condition of affairs had come to pass. That it had come to pass there was no denying. But she was certain it could make no difference. Her duty to her father, the things she must do, were barriers which made it safe for her to dream a little by herself, secure in the knowledge that these things would stand forever between herself and any reality the dreams might contain. She could be sure, too, that none would ever be the wiser, none would ever know.

But God planned more wisely than this, for He has made it possible for the heart of a man to call to that of a woman and for hers to answer without fear and without shame.

That Sunday morning, Dorothea could still be quite severe in her criticism of Stephen Lane. When

Mary discussed him with her, Dorothea was almost willing to speak lightly of what she termed his evident conceit and his certainty of his own superiority. Yet the times Dorothea met Stephen in Red Lane, his sincerity had quite disarmed her. In secret, Dorothea's heart rejoiced at Mary's warm defence of Stephen. She knew that Mary was right, yet she could not help wishing that sometimes Stephen was not quite so sure of himself. Dorothea recalled the first meeting of the Elders of the church and their new minister. The Sabbath quiet of the Brevoort home had been quite disturbed after dinner, for Peter Brevoort claimed the credit of a new plan to increase the usefulness of the church. Jacob Brevoort had laughed heartily at his brother's words.

"Peter," he had said, "Mr. Lane wound you around his finger as if you were a child. That was *his* plan. He merely made you believe it was yours, for if he had not done so, he knew well you would have been opposed to it."

It was because Dorothea knew her father so well that she wondered at Stephen's courage. It made her just a little bit timid to find that this man was keen enough to gain his purpose by leading her own father into approving a plan to which he would have been opposed, had he believed it originated in anyone but himself. Dorothea did not realise that it is possible for a mind capable of matching itself against strong natures and making them do its bidding, to be, at the same time, broad enough and unselfish enough to be magnanimous and just, and to use its power only worthily. Yet even then when she

was just beginning to know Stephen, she felt how safe it was to put her trust in him absolutely.

Had Dorothea known that Alen Therwith was exerting a similar control over her father, but only for the purpose of serving Alen's own, selfish, unworthy ends, she would have seen the difference and have understood how completely Stephen was using his ability for good. More than this, Dorothea might have been spared much, could she have seen and known this difference just then. Yet perhaps her happiness was dearer for the trials that were part of it.

There would be a time when Dorothea was no longer content to sit in church and listen to Stephen's voice. There would be a time, too, when the day-dream of that Sabbath morning would have grown to something so much more splendid, so much more precious. Instinctively the girl's heart knew this, and because her Father in Heaven wanted it to be so, Dorothea looked into the future with perfect trust.

It was nearly breakfast time. Dorothea knew that Mary would waken soon. There were only a few minutes more of this blessed time in which she could be alone with her thoughts. Her mind pictured again eagerly all that Stephen did from the moment he entered the pulpit until the service was over. There was no little movement, no change in his tone or attitude that was not equally familiar and equally delightful to her. When he prayed, Stephen turned his face toward the sky. It was so that Dorothea liked best to think of him. His face was not handsome. Dorothea was glad, for she loved the strength,

the courage, the tenderness she saw there. After the service there would be just a moment when the minister shook hands with her mother and with her. It was only a moment, just a friendly, cheerful word of greeting. Yet the girl carried it home with her in her heart, in the heart that did not care just then whether or not it meant to Stephen what it did to her. It would be soon enough that she would learn how much she wanted it to mean to Stephen Lane, too. Indeed, that very Sunday Dorothea knew for the first time that she wanted Stephen to find in their greeting the happiness she did. This was brought about by the fact that that morning, Stephen stood beside his open Bible in the pulpit and watched them all go slowly away, with no thought, apparently, that he had ever done otherwise. Perhaps it was because Dorothea's heart was thus denied the moment it had anticipated, that so great a change was wrought. Among the congregation that day, who would have believed, had they been told, that the Dorothea Brevoort who walked home through the December sunshine with her mother, was a different woman from the one who entered the church an hour before? Some, had they been told it, would have said that the sermon must have been meant for her, and others, not because they were wiser, but because they had learned to speak as if they were, would have said that God alone could have worked such a miracle. And in truth they would have been right. For it was not the sermon, nor was it the tiny prayer that she whispered to herself after Stephen had finished the prayer that was for all of them—nor was it the music. It was only that a nod

and a smile and a pleasant word that her heart needed had been denied to her. Thus in little things God works the great changes in human lives.

Long years afterward, Stephen told Dorothea why he did not leave his pulpit that morning. She could not guess then that only a few nights before, Alen and Stephen had had their talk together in the little house beside the church. Had Dorothea known, perhaps she would have been but hurt the more from the mere knowledge of the selfishness that was planning to add her to the sacrifices that were to be laid on the altar of its desires.

CHAPTER XIII

STEPHEN'S RESOLVE

IN the year 1850, New Year's Day came upon Wednesday. It was the preceding Friday night that Alen Therwith and Stephen talked in the latter's study. Those few days Stephen Lane never forgot. He was glad that they were filled with work, work that occupied every waking moment. Otherwise Stephen could not have been so brave. He lent himself to his work with an energy that was tireless. He could not bear to think of the quiet days that would come when the New Year's service was ended. There would be nothing then but his books or the visit to someone who was ill, or the writing of his sermons. Stephen did not dare to contemplate it. He knew if he paused to think at all, then, there would be an end to his doing the work as it should be done.

The Sabbath, part of which Dorothea spent with her daydreams, was an almost endless one for Stephen, marking as it did the beginning of the days that Stephen believed were to be his always. Yet it was as well that Stephen knew neither of Dorothea's daydream nor of the disappointment that Sabbath brought her.

Monday and Tuesday Stephen spent in going over and over again each detail of the New Year's Eve service. In doing so, he exacted of himself a zeal

and energy that made far too great a tax upon him. At no time, and least of all since his talk with Alen, was Stephen a man who could spare himself. Instead, he set about the task sternly, determinedly, with all the strength that was his.

The congregation looked on and wondered. They knew, of course, the pride Stephen Lane took in his work, and they attributed even his unwonted energy to that, and they rejoiced over the enthusiasm he showed. They spoke to others who were not of their church, with honest self-satisfaction, of Stephen Lane and the marked success that was crowning his efforts. They were good people, and while they could not understand fully all of Stephen's hopes, they took his energy and the results it accomplished at their full value and loved Stephen Lane with a love that was sincere. They believed Stephen's added energy, as he went about his preparation for this New Year's service, to be but a further indication of his interest in them and in all he was doing, and they were eager to let him see that they understood and were not ungrateful.

Never has New Year's Eve come to the church that stands at the foot of the Iron Hill and found it filled with men and women in more earnest devotion. Stephen Lane looked at their upturned faces and wondered why it was that he was not able to give them all for which they hungered. Often he had felt just that—the knowledge that their hearts were starving for the lack of a sympathy divine enough to bridge over for them the space between their hearts and God. As the service was beginning, its wonderful significance

and beauty brought Stephen to a sharper realisation of the change that Alen's words had made for him and the new duty that now was his, and would be his through all the time that was to come.

One could tell that the minister loved music, for that night it formed a still greater part of the service even than is usual in the Moravian Church. It was not alone that Stephen Lane liked the music of the masters. He caught the spirit that made the music immortal. They were singing now. It was Haydn's "Farewell," and again and again the strong, manly voices and the sweeter ones of the women were lifted up together, strengthened by the deep tones of the organ, while clear and true above all rang the notes of the trombones, now catching up and swelling the volume of the music and now dying away. What did it matter that outside was the sharpness of the winter's night or that the stars looked down from a sky so clear and cold that it seemed as if the air itself was frozen? Within the church those good people found nothing but warmth and light and friendly, kindly feeling that brings a man's heart closer to that of his neighbour. What better time than this for such a scene, when the old year is drawing to a close, leaving behind it but the memory of days of peace and happiness? No wonder that they thanked God for it that night and stood together for a little while to wish each other all the good things that a New Year can bring. It is such a night and such a scene that shows what it means to be honest and true and good, and to believe that God is good.

Stephen had arranged that a portion of the Christ-

mas service should be repeated that night. Thus it was that they sang the parts of Beethoven's Mass that Stephen liked best. As always, he had them sing the German words:

"Sei willkommen,
Schoener Stern in heilger Nacht!
Ganz von Andacht hingenommen
Schau' Ich deine stille Pracht!
Hosiana! Gelobet sei Der da kommt
Im Namen des Herrn. . . ."

The music died away. There came a hush and the faces were turned toward Stephen standing there before them, quite alone. Because his work had not been in vain, because they loved him, the faces looking up at him were sympathetic and kind. Even on those that the years of toil had marked indelibly, there came a softer expression, showing that even to them Stephen had brought something to make the way easier. The hush lingered for a little while. They were waiting for him to speak.

Over at one side of the church, a woman wiped her eyes as she looked, because, at the sight of Stephen Lane, she thought of another night when he had watched over her sick child in her humble home. To and fro through the long hours of the night, Stephen had carried the child, because the mother herself was too worn and tired. There by her side that New Year's Eve was the little one. No wonder it was indeed a night to be thankful for. And the glory of it was that Stephen Lane looked from one face to another and did not see what he was to all of them.

Stephen began speaking. As always, his voice was low and he spoke quietly and slowly. This manner of Stephen's was no trick by which to gain and hold their attention. It was all quite natural to him, just as he spoke simply, so that the children understood as perfectly as did their elders. Perhaps this was one of the ways he gained his hold over them.

"Now that the old year is dying, we have gathered together to tell it farewell before it goes into Eternity. There is sadness in the thought, yet with it there must be a great measure of good cheer and thankfulness. More than this, we turn toward the New Year, welcoming it as our Father in Heaven wants us to, by our eagerness to make it hold for each of us but higher achievement in all that lies before us to do. Yet in truth, there is no reason why this night should be different from each of the other nights that we have known. Each marks the ending and the beginning of a day, and because this one marks likewise the ending and beginning of the year, it holds a deeper significance only because we are used to measure our lives by their years, forgetting that each day must be spent bravely, usefully, unselfishly, if the years are to be likewise marked. This is the true meaning of our service. This is the reason we find rising in our hearts to-night no feeling of elation or of sadness over the successes and failures of the year that is ending, but only a greater determination to do the will of our Father so far as it lies in us in the year to come. As with all years, sorrow and suffering have marked the days. Sunshine and shadow must succeed each other in human life as in the rest of Nature.

Were it not so, the year would not hold for any of us aught that could make us better for having lived it. The great lessons life has to teach us are faith in our God, willingness to bear patiently what life holds for us, whether it be of sorrow and loneliness or much that is brighter."

The words of the minister could have come only from a heart that was itself filled to overflowing with tenderness. Thus those among his listeners who might have thought that Stephen Lane was lonely, that his work was, perhaps, too hard for so young a man, dismissed all their doubts that night as they heard him speak. Stephen had chosen brave words, words that neither the men nor the women forgot, words that made husband and wife more tender toward each other, words that gave them all courage to try again, no matter how often they had failed before.

Year upon year has come and grown old and slipped away since that night, and as years always must be, they have been filled with evil and good, with selfishness and unselfishness, with sorrow and happiness, with hate and love. The world has not gone backward since then, yet it is hard to find another man such as Stephen Lane, or one who speaks words as brave as were his that night.

While he spoke, Stephen's eyes wandered from one to another till he had found them all. He saw the good face of Jacob Brevoort looking at him with mingled pride and love, as though Stephen were his own son. There was another face that was happy, too, that of Mary Blake. Stephen wondered where Ralph could be. Ah, yes, there he was, standing far

back at the end of the aisle. Then, as they always must, Stephen's eyes went on to where they met the dark eyes of Alen Therwith, that seemed to Stephen, no matter which way he looked, to be always upon him. Then Stephen sought Dorothea where she sat between Alen and her mother. Stephen's words did not falter, though he heard his own voice as one in a dream. Then he was himself again, giving all the strength of his heart and soul to those good people.

Suddenly Stephen's words were lost in a burst of music and song, for the New Year had come and they welcomed it, as is the Moravian custom, without even waiting for Stephen to stop speaking. Their hymn of thanksgiving rolled through the church, rising louder and louder as voice after voice caught up the words:

"Mache dich auf, es werde Licht! den dein Licht kommt, und die Herrlichkeit des Herrn gehet auf über dir!"

Again and again the music rose like a great wave from hearts that were thankful for the years that had been and for the New Year God had sent. Stephen Lane bowed his head, and his heart uttered a prayer which no one heard and for which there were no words.

Still singing they turned to go. Slowly in twos and threes they made their way out into the night, some of them singing still as they stood outside in the frosty air. The church was empty now, the trombones had ceased, and the heavy notes of the organ died away. The last of his people lingered about the door. They were sorry to leave him there alone,

but they did not wish to disturb him. It had been enough, the brave words Stephen said to them that night. It had been enough that he had made them put their resolution high and had shown them where the strength could only come from to accomplish all they should.

The sexton tiptoed softly about, closing the church and turning out the lights. One near Stephen was left burning. The man was quite used to this lonely figure. Often he had left Stephen thus in the dark church. Yet even he was reluctant to go, and stood for a moment, watching Stephen's bowed head and motionless figure, with the lamplight shining dimly upon him.

All the good cheer the people took with them when they went out into the night, left but a greater sense of loneliness in the empty church behind them. Was it of this that Stephen was thinking? Oh, that it might have been only that!

The work that had made it possible for him to go through the long days since Alen Therwith had talked with him in his study was over now. There was nothing left that he could use to ward off the full realisation of his burden. He, the minister, the man who that very night had stood before them all and spoken to them such ringing words, telling them to be strong and true to the best; who had pointed out to them the nobleness of self-sacrifice, was himself falling far short of his own ideals. Stephen looked ahead through the long, lonely years of his work, of his life, that only a little while before he had thought of so hopefully. Stephen saw himself. It was not

with pity, but rather with sorrow because he was falling short of the high mark he had set for himself. He saw the great burden of it all, making him grow old while he should have yet been young. He saw even his congregation losing faith in him because his confidence in himself was gone. To Stephen, it was no new figure—that of a man who has failed. And he knew that in spite of all he had professed, now that the test had fallen on him, he was failing utterly, miserably. He saw himself but the shadow of the man he might have been. Ah, the man he might have been! The man he was so sure of being; the man he had told himself he would become, on that first day as he stood under the apple tree looking down the side of the Iron Hill at this very church. How he had pictured himself in his pride, the brave, unselfish man that was to bring so much good to these people!

The thought of the day he first came to Staten Island brought Stephen sharply to the present again. Even as he was standing there in the church, Dorothea was walking up the hill away from him, past the tree that had stood on that May day like a bride in the sunshine. She was going home to the very house that Stephen had wondered about. Since he had seen Dorothea, it never seemed strange to Stephen that he had wondered about it. He was merely surprised that he had noticed anything else.

Stephen's thoughts went on to those walks with Dorothea in Red Lane. It was the one comforting thing his mind found upon which to dwell. Here at least was something of which Stephen could think

and find strength in so doing. Perhaps after a while he could become brave enough to bear these things as it was his duty to do. The least he could do for Dorothea's sake would be this—to make of himself but a nobler man because of what he had to bear. Not only must he try, but he must succeed. Yet that night, even the thought of trying was too hard. Then Stephen remembered Alen Therwith. Stephen despised himself because of all he permitted Alen's name to bring to his mind. He had tried to admire Alen, to think only of the strong, rugged manhood that fought its way over all obstacles. The character appealed to Stephen because of his own strength. Yet he well knew all that Alen lacked. The thought brought a pain to Stephen that was so sharp he could have cried aloud from the agony of it. How was Dorothea to bear the untold suffering that would come when at last she found in Alen no response to her own heart's purity? All of Dorothea's tender thoughts and gentle, pure impulses would be merely accepted by Alen Therwith as but in further gratification of his selfishness. Stephen turned sick and faint at the thought. He saw Alen's grossness. He saw the selfish man with whom Dorothea was to go through the years. All that there was about her that was so sacred to Stephen, the gentle, tender heart, the daintiness, the womanliness, all was to be so hurt and bruised, and in the end, almost taken from her. Or worse still, perhaps, she would struggle against it, clinging to the purity of her heart in spite of Alen. At best, it would mean that Dorothea would be quite alone. Thus would her life be sacri-

ficed. Stephen tried to blot the thoughts out because he knew they were unworthy. He asked God to forgive him, raising his head as he did so and standing in his pulpit as once before that night, when all the congregation were there. He prayed, too, that he might be strong enough to put away from him such thoughts of another man as these. But something stronger than his own will, stronger than his prayers, made his mind go on relentlessly through it all. He wondered what Dorothea found in Alen Therwith that caused her to care. He could find nothing, except, indeed, all that Alen had done for Peter Brevoort. Then he asked himself if Dorothea's father had brought it all about and whether Dorothea acted from a sense of gratitude. Then it was that Stephen hated himself completely, for he knew Dorothea too well to believe for an instant that she could give herself to a man for any reason other than that she loved him. Stephen's heart told him what marriage meant to a woman like Dorothea Brevoort. He knew such a thing was impossible to Dorothea, yet he was apprehensive that perhaps she had not stopped to think of it all clearly. Suppose there were reasons which he could not even guess, that caused her to believe she felt toward Alen as in reality she did not? Stephen shuddered. What the years would then mean to Dorothea! Stephen could see her very heart and soul turning away from the touch of this man from whom she could not escape. Then he was ashamed of himself because he had been so afraid of a little loneliness. After all, it was such a simple situation. He, the minister, had seen fit to forget the

high calling that was his and had let his mind wander from its path of duty to other things. He had been guilty of a great sin. A man whom he had tried to teach to depend on him and trust him had come to him in full faith and confidence. The man had told the minister of the precious thing that had come into his life, and of the woman who had sent the man to him. God had meant it all just as it was, Stephen told himself, that he might learn a lesson. He had been weak. He had let himself become sick and old at the thought of the loneliness. But from this night, it was all to be changed. At least Dorothea, even though she did not nor could ever know, would have no cause to be ashamed of him or to believe that he had chosen the coward's part. Perhaps it would be a long time before he could find strength to keep from failing, yet in the end it would be so. There would not be one little act in which he would fail the high standard Dorothea herself would have put upon it, had she been there to know. Thus he would live nobly, worthy of her, because of her, rising always to a more complete fulfilment of each duty. God meant that he should love Dorothea, and he would go on loving her, but it would ever be something to lead him onward and upward. His Father in Heaven had not meant it to do other than to make him stronger, make him more of a man, more fitted for the work that was his.

Stephen Lane's eyes no longer saw the empty church nor the gloom about him. He looked far into the distant land of the future and in spite of the keenness with which the knowledge of his longing and

loneliness came to him, the same high purpose that had always marked his life led him now to greater strength and more splendid achievement. It was no resolution to be lightly taken and lightly kept. Stephen Lane pledged his life on the altar of his affection—to use it all nobly, worthily, as the man must to whom God had given a treasure such as was his love for Dorothea Brevoort. Other men had found the way to live useful, unselfish lives under circumstances that were similar. Nor would he do less. As his love for Dorothea was more priceless than any other man had known, so it would but lead him to a greater unselfishness, till he had become more nearly the man Dorothea would have wanted him to be, could she have known.

At last Stephen moved. The church was growing cold. He put out the light and made his way through the darkness along the familiar aisle. Outside he locked the great door behind him. He did not even glance at the road leading to the top of the Iron Hill. It was time to begin now, to set himself bravely upon the new way, to remember that even as God saw each act of his, so each act should be such as Dorothea might see too, and seeing, would know that he lived as the man who loved her should.

But, oh, the loneliness of the little house!

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH THE ELDERS' REQUEST IS REFUSED

THE depths of Winter were still upon the land. Far down from the North, through the frozen valley of the Hudson, came the wind, to search out every nook and crevice in the white house on the Iron Hill, that it might find its way into the warmth of even that home. It was night and in the great kitchen were gathered the same five who met before in the humbler home of Thaddeus Knox—the Elders of the Moravian Church. The fire on the great hearth lighted the farthest recesses of the room. All were seated about the clean wooden table. That night the voice of Thaddeus Knox sounded older and dryer in the great room, and his familiar suit of brown looked older and browner and shabbier, too, than before. He rose and leaned against the table and paused a moment before he spoke.

“We told him,” he said, “how we, the Elders, had met and discussed it all fully. We pointed out to him that not only had this been an accepted custom of our church since the beginning, but also, because it had always been used wisely and cautiously, happiness and all that was hoped for besides had invariably come. Indeed, we went further, showing him clearly that it was more than mere marriage by lot that was suggested. We told Stephen Lane that because we were the Elders, the responsibility rested with us for the

measure of success our church achieved, and how we had endeavoured to exercise with wisdom the right that was clearly ours—of deciding whether or not our church required that its minister should have a wife. If we had told him that some among us believed that he needed a woman to help him, to make a home for him, I would not have been surprised at his refusal, for all of us know how unselfish he is and he would not be likely to adopt the suggestion that appeared to be solely for his own benefit. We felt certain, that is, Thomas Witte and I felt certain, that if we told him that his duty to the church demanded he take this step, he would not hesitate in so doing. So we told him that in the judgment of the Elders, his work would be the better and his field of usefulness the broader if he had a wife to share it with him. Stephen listened quietly and without a word, as he always does. When we had finished speaking, he took a turn or two up and down the little room, while Thomas and I sat there wondering. Then he stopped in front of me and smiled down at me, (you know how, John Blake,) and then he said—and then he said——”

Just there the little dry voice found it hard to go on, and Thaddeus Knox glanced hastily and piteously from one face to another. Then he turned.

“You tell them, Thomas,” he said.

But Thomas Witte only shut his eyes and rolled his head slowly from side to side. So after a moment, the shrill, dry voice went on again, sharper than before, if that were possible.

“Then he said,” repeated Thaddeus, “‘I understand. You do not need to tell me anything further.

You as the Elders have done your full duty toward the church and toward me. I know and understand what marriage by lot means to those who are of our church. I know the sacredness with which it is approached, and the happiness it has brought. I know too, that in asking your minister to share his life with the woman whom you may select, you are doing only that which you have a right to do. More than this, we have been together long enough for me to know that you mean it all kindly, and I would do quite wrong, if I did not thank you. I want you to be certain that the decision I send back by you to the rest of the Elders, is not one that I make hastily, though I had never even thought of such a thing as this until you began speaking. You must know, too, that I do not send it in any spirit other than one of sorrow because it must grieve you who have been so good to me. If you have found that your minister has failed you in anything, I am quite ready, quite willing to do whatever you may deem best to correct the fault. If in your judgment you believe that a man who had a wife to help him in his work would serve the church as its minister, better than I, then it is only for me to tell you that you will have to get such another man. For myself, it is quite impossible—it is a request to which I cannot accede, and if it is a fault, it is one I cannot mend. In all things, I have tried to do my duty to God and to the church. But I will take for my wife for the sake of the church no woman, unless—unless I love her.’ Then he shook hands with us both, did he not, Thomas? And directly afterward, we came away.”

When Thaddeus Knox ceased speaking, there was silence in the old Dutch kitchen for a long time. At last, Thomas Witte spoke, though apparently but to himself.

"It is all so," he said thickly, "it is all so, just as I say."

The tone of both the speakers rather than their words showed how plainly they feared the harm that might come to Stephen Lane because of their message and his reply. Thaddeus Knox and Thomas Witte, whatever their sense of duty toward their church had been, now that Stephen had refused to comply with their request, had no thought other than of the injury it might do him, of the effect it might have on Stephen Lane's future. Thus there was shown some measure of the affection they held for him and that, in this respect, at least, Stephen had not laboured in vain. While their own stern, almost Puritanical sense of right would permit them to modify neither their request nor Stephen's answer, yet the affection they held for him had unconsciously made their words to Stephen less harsh, and their account of Stephen's reply less determined than was Stephen's own, in order that the other Elders might not judge him unkindly.

The round, jolly face of Thomas Witte lost some of its ruddiness as he sat in the silence following his own words. Well he knew what might come of all of this, and he feared the part which he would perhaps be called upon to play. His affection for Stephen was nearly triumphing over what he knew the others would point out to him as his duty, and he trembled

lest they should succeed. He well knew that John Blake, for one, would follow the dictates of conscience and his sense of duty toward their church, no matter how hard it might be for him to do so. Then Thomas looked at Peter Brevoort, and even his kindly nature almost suspected Peter's self-seeking. But Thomas Witte speedily put away from himself even the least suggestion of suspicion. Then for comfort his little eyes sought Jacob Brevoort and were almost content again.

Nowadays, in the hurry of affairs, men have little time to deliberate as did those five, over such a matter. Thus it is easier now to neglect many of the things that go to make up one's complete duty in life. It takes far less time and trouble to contribute money to one's church in lieu of earnest work. In this way there is speedily formed in every church a class that finds no interest in the reality of the work and has no thought of a larger measure of good that may be performed, being content in the main to criticise what is done by those who are willing to sacrifice their own comfort and convenience for their church. In that older time, men and women cared. All that touched their church touched them, and they were eager that no part of its work, however small, should be neglected. Such a matter as that with which the Elders laboured that night now so long ago, was of vital importance to them all. To them, as to Stephen Lane, there was nothing unusual or unreal in the situation. They were men whose consciences were not to be lulled to quiet by subtle reasoning, or forgotten in the distractions of a busy world. It was all earnest

and all important. Yet through it, their affection for Stephen struggled with what they believed they should make come to pass, that their church might grow and its influence spread through all of Staten Island.

"I am sorry," said John Blake, at last, "that we sent anyone to him. I wish we had not discussed this matter. I feel that after all, the church has been doing as much as we could hope. Moreover, the minister has done far more than anyone we have had before, and I have been thinking that perhaps it is enough."

Yet he spoke doubtfully, for he knew what must be in the minds of some of his listeners. It was easy to see that Peter Brevoort was roused by John Blake's words. Indeed, Peter Brevoort could not wait for him to cease speaking, and now he rose and turned from one to another as he spoke, that they might not miss the force of his words.

"I, for one," he began vehemently, "think that Stephen Lane's answer to us has changed the whole situation, and not for good, either. It's become a question as to whether the Elders are to carry on the work as we think it should be, or whether the minister is to follow his own inclinations and accept or reject our decisions to suit his fancy. The history of our church shows conclusively that that which we have asked of him in this instance is nothing new or unusual. It is something that he must have recognised as a possibility always, as likely to happen. It is his own convenience, his own personal desire as opposed to our decision conscientiously formed that is the ques-

tion with which we have to deal now. I never suspected Stephen Lane would put his personal feeling before his duty to the church. I certainly never thought he would refuse to acquiesce in a decision of the Elders. It was our duty, not his, to decide whether the work would succeed better if the minister had a wife. That is all there is to it."

Thomas Witte's face was pale again. Things were taking the very course he feared. The alternatives were quite apparent to him. On the one hand, as Peter Brevoort had pointed out, Stephen's refusal had brought about a test of strength and authority between the Elders and the minister. Thomas Witte knew well that it was impossible for the Elders to withdraw their request and still retain their position in control of the affairs of the church. Yet he knew Stephen well enough to have no doubt that Stephen in his turn would not change from the position he had taken. Thomas Witte remembered that Stephen had spoken to Thaddeus Knox and himself without haste and without anger, and with no thought of himself, but only of what he believed to be right. No, Stephen would never change. The only way would be for Stephen Lane to go away, that the church at the foot of the Iron Hill might have a new minister with whom the Elders would have no conflict of authority. Secretly, Thomas Witte was eager that the Elders should withdraw the direction they had sent to Stephen. No one but themselves need ever know of the incident, and thus their authority would not be lessened in the eyes of the congregation. Yet while his heart suggested this, his head told him that with these

blunt, straightforward men about him, such a thing was impossible. Not only would they lose Stephen, but Thomas Witte knew that Stephen would have to go in disgrace. There would be no way to conceal what had occurred. Perhaps it could be announced that the minister was called to some distant place, yet here again Thomas Witte knew that he planned the impossible, for Stephen himself, when the time came, would not let it be otherwise than that all should know the facts and the full measure of his disobedience and his willingness to pay the penalty. After all, it was better that this should be so than that the Elders should modify the position they had taken. All of them saw this clearly.

Jacob Brevoort wondered why any of them was surprised at Stephen's answer. He understood Stephen so well that he knew perfectly why Stephen had spoken as he did. Yet Jacob Brevoort, too, measured his own duty. He saw how impossible any compromise was, and how, for Stephen at least, it was better that this should be so, rather than that his influence be lessened and his respect for himself destroyed in part by his willingness to sacrifice his own conscience to theirs. The Elders and Stephen had set their strength against each other, and Jacob Brevoort saw that inevitably one must suffer and that one, Stephen. So on all of them the burden lay heavy indeed.

It has often happened that good men find themselves distressed because duty seems to call them in two directions. If a man has no conscience, he apparently finds all of this so much easier. His two good

friends are always waiting for him, the one who leads him to greater profit to himself, who asks only what gain there is in each thing, and the other friend, who is known as the line of least resistance. Thus can he go through life, if he shares all things with these two, knowing almost no sorrow, and alas, no happiness. There is good reason to rejoice over the men who pass by both of these friends because they are unworthy. If such men are said to be stern, it must not be forgotten that oftentimes their hearts are filled with tenderness.

The best part of a brave man is that not only does he do all that he must, but he does it so that none save himself knows the cost of his courage. Had Stephen Lane stopped to think, he would have known that most of the Elders were this kind of men. It was because he too, was one of them, that he had no thought for his own welfare. Nor did he consider it. Even now as the Elders were deliberating, Stephen was on his way up the Iron Hill to the white house.

In this day and generation, such an incident can scarcely be understood. Indeed, practically none of it is now possible. Thus to-day it is all strange and strained and unnatural, as though those men were making for themselves an unnecessary burden out of the merest trifle. Yet in truth this was not so. It is all to be understood when judged by the measure of conscience by which men in those days were content to be guided. Neither the Elders nor Stephen Lane exaggerated the importance of the matter. It was merely that they saw it in its true light and gave it the consideration to which it was entitled,

while in these later days there is neither time nor inclination so to do.

Stephen was endeavouring to see the problem in every light, to apply to its solution all the reasonableness and judgment of which he was capable. Not that his own attitude would be altered, for his heart told him readily enough that there could be no change. But as always he must be fortified by calm reasoning and an unselfish, brave standard of right and wrong. It was merely that the Elders had asked something of him which he could not do, though Stephen admitted that it was for them to decide whether the church needed what they asked for it. It was not because he had refused that his step was slower as he reached the top of the Iron Hill, nor was it from hesitancy as to what he himself must do that he paused and looked down the steep side of the hill toward the sea. Stephen Lane wanted that quiet moment, and he knew it was one of those that would cling to him always through life. It was another such moment as the one that found him standing beneath the apple-tree and looking out across the valley to the church and at the little house beside it, and at the white house on the Iron Hill, the morning when he saw them for the first time. Yet now all that had been true then was changed. With high courage Stephen told himself that there should be nothing unhappy in it, nothing to make him sad. Indeed, this that had happened might make it easier for him to be brave. The struggle that had been his since the night he and Alen Therewith had talked in Stephen's study had taught him not only the boundless measure of his affection for

Dorothea, but that there was a limit even to his courage in doing all that he must to bring happiness to her. Surely now the way was to become clearer. He had but to repeat to them that night the refusal he had already made, and ask them to deal with him in whatever manner would be best for the church. He asked no leniency, he wanted none. For a moment, his heart was almost persuaded to believe that if they told him he must go away, go somewhere where there would be nothing to remind him of Dorothea, it would all be easier. None among his people needed him save Ruy Calidan. He would take Ruy with him, and the boy's search for his father could go on in a new place. Doubtless it was all but some fancy of Ruy's misformed mind, so that after all, even he would suffer no harm if he went with Stephen. Then he could leave Dorothea here on Staten Island, safe with her happiness, and try to forget, somewhere out there in the broad world. Yes, that was the easiest way. But it was only for a moment that the suggestion of such thoughts found their way to Stephen's mind. Immediately his heart rose within him in its eagerness to put from him forever even such a suggestion. Far below him in the quiet night stood the line of bare trees along Red Lane. Just the sight of them banished from Stephen's mind the weakness that had almost come upon him. Once again it was afternoon, and once again he met Dorothea in Red Lane and walked with her while he told her of his work and of the day's happenings.

Oh, blessed time, oh, precious, precious moments! Stephen knew how he would cherish them, how he had

cherished them. He could only ask himself what he had done to deserve that they should have been true. For those few moments at least, which could never be taken from him, he and Dorothea had been so alone together in the world Stephen had let himself believe they were discovering. There had been something so intimate, so precious, in being thus alone with Dorothea. How he remembered each word she had spoken; how he dwelt on them now; how they told him of Dorothea and of her sense of what she was! Yet Alen Therwith had told him——.

Even then Stephen's heart was not to be silenced, nor would it cease to believe in the infinite happiness Dorothea and he might have found together, the happiness which she could not have found anywhere else, nor with anyone but Stephen. There were to be no more of those afternoons in Red Lane in any event, Stephen told himself, even had not this request been made by the Elders. Alen's talk with him had made it wrong for him to so much as want it to be otherwise. It was a high standard, indeed, that Stephen set for himself, yet it could not have been otherwise, with such a man as he. It may be that there are to-day such men, and if any there be, they find as great a happiness as did Stephen Lane, in being thus true to the right. God does not let the heart of such a man know loneliness too great for it to bear, nor does He forget that the burden is borne here in this world for the greater glory of His love.

Stephen could not bear to think of the day when Dorothea should know, as sooner or later she must, and would believe that he had gone away in disgrace.

Nor could he ever tell her. Stephen was quite ashamed. His old manhood took possession of him again. Even though Dorothea was never to know, he would do nothing that the man who loved her should not do. He would keep himself worthy so that there should be nothing in all the days of his life that Dorothea might not look upon and looking, be glad that she had brought even to him an affection that made it impossible for him to be other than true to those things over which her own heart in its purity would rejoice. Nor was this to be fair promise for future days. Dorothea had shown him the only way there was for him to live. He would begin now. He would tell the Elders the truth. He would not live one moment less worthily now that all he should do had been made so clear before him. The thought brought with it the impulse to go on to the white house on the hill. Yet even as he did so came the knowledge that in telling them the truth, he must still shield Dorothea. It was not from the truth itself he must shield her, for no act of his should ever be such that the truth about it could harm her. It was only the opportunity it might give to someone to misinterpret or misrepresent what he should tell them. Indeed, he would guard Dorothea from this, even at the cost of being misjudged himself. Doubtless Dorothea would never know the real reason for his going away, nor could it matter much to her anyway, now. Perhaps she might wonder about it, but Stephen could think of no good reason why she should do even that. Yet there came before him the recollection of Dorothea's clear eyes, soft, gentle, wonderful, as they always were when she

looked at him. Stephen's heart would not be denied now. Might it not mean something to Dorothea after all? Resolutely Stephen put the thought from him. Had she not sent Alen Therwith to him for advice and guidance? It was but his own fancy that had woven a wonderfully tender meaning about the walks in Red Lane and Dorothea's words. After all, it had been but her kindness to him, the sweetness of her heart that she gave alike to all who came. Who better than he should know how gentle and unselfish her dear heart was? Stephen Lane knew that this which the Elders asked of him was a sin and to him an impossible one. Body and mind and heart revolted against it. The very idea, irrespective of its application to himself, was wholly wrong. God could not want a man and woman to try to share their lives where the choice of each other, instead of being the choice of their own hearts, was but based on such fitness of the woman and man for each other as their church found in them. Stephen could find no duty that he owed the Elders of the church to be compared with his duty toward his Maker. It would have been the same had he never known Dorothea. But he must recognise his affection for her as the very centre of himself. If there was mingled with his love for Dorothea any unworthy feeling, if it meant to him other than the unending wish to cherish her, to give to her all the affection and tenderness his heart could devise, even though there was to be nothing in return, Stephen knew his affection would have been something of his own invention, something he had made up out of his own imagination, and which he tried to

call by the precious name he knew in truth belonged to it. Stephen did not ask why God wanted him to love Dorothea, nor did he wonder about it. He was only glad that it was so, that he had this precious thing to keep always in the secret places of his heart. It should lift him up and make him stronger and better, so that after a while, all that was not as Dorothea herself would have it would become impossible to him. Stephen turned again and went on to the white house.

How well it is that Providence does not let the heart see one step into the future. Only the Infinite Heart can do that, else there would be nothing but terror to men because they could foresee the hardships that sometimes lie before them. Two things are gained from the fact that men cannot see the future. The first is faith, faith in our Father in Heaven and His ceaseless care over us and His mercy toward us; the second, courage through this faith to be unselfish. Were it not for this faith and courage, the world itself would be robbed of the great measure of happiness that God lets be its portion. Thus it was as well that Stephen Lane could not foresee what lay before him as he entered the kitchen of the white house that night. But before he did so, he paused a moment in the darkness. About him was the quiet that night had drawn as a cloak over all the land so familiar to him, making it weird and grotesque. He was not afraid to take the step upon which he had decided, yet he wanted to pause just an instant before the decision became irrevocable. Just for that instant his heart insisted on clinging once again to its own dreams of happiness before they must be put away.

finally and forever. The night air touched Stephen's cheek and cooled it and gave him back his reason and the ability to think calmly.

"It must be," he said to himself, "that I need just this to make me worthy."

He brushed back the hair from his forehead and looked up into the sky with eyes that did not see.

"Don't be afraid," he said softly, "I will not fail even in the least of things, for your sake——"

But even the night wind, in spite of its gentleness, could not catch the name that Stephen whispered.

The Elders were no longer seated beside the bare table. They formed a semicircle now about the broad hearth where the fire leapt high and crackled as the dry wood burned. After he had greeted them, Stephen crossed the room and stood before the hearth with his back toward it. Thus he faced them, erect and strong.

As always, Stephen turned seriously from one to another. Yet for the moment, affection for each of them gave him no other thought than the desire to make this scene as easy for them as he could.

Peter Brevoort resumed the position of spokesman for the rest of the Elders. He could scarcely wait for the quiet to follow Stephen's entrance before he spoke. He was eager to be harsh with the minister, but Stephen's manhood and gentleness made even Peter Brevoort pause and watch him for an instant. On Stephen's face came the shadow of a smile, the cheerful, unselfish smile that went straight from his heart. He waited respectfully for Peter Brevoort to speak.

The latter cleared his throat. Then he too, rose and, putting his Dutch pipe on the shelf beside the great fireplace, seated himself again and planting his feet wide apart, rested his hands on his knees.

"I tell you," he said slowly to Stephen, "there are few men who have received as much consideration as you have to-night from us."

Stephen bowed his head slightly. Peter Brevoort went on.

"I am not going to refer to the request that we, as the Elders, sent to you by Thaddeus Knox and Thomas Witte," indicating the two men with a wave of his hand. "You have seen fit to refuse to do what we have decided is right and best. You ought to know that that is our part of the work here. The only part that is yours is to carry out all we plan without questioning either our right to decide, or our wisdom in making our decision."

Stephen bowed his head again. He understood now, and was glad he could make it all so much easier for them.

"Yet you are conceited and self-satisfied enough with your work to refuse——"

Peter's voice was louder now. Stephen raised his hand.

"I understand," he said gently. "It is quite clear to me. It will be easier for all of you if instead of trying to tell me more, you let me speak for a moment."

Then he paused and looked from one to the other, not as though asking their permission to go on, but rather waiting for their undivided attention to what

he was about to say. Yet even that instant his heart was almost forgetting these men before him. Somewhere in this very house, so near to him, yet just where he did not know, somewhere was Dorothea, and there was nothing to tell her of what was going on or of how he was trying to be worthy. Yet after all, was he not seeking a higher worthiness from the very fact that she could never know just how he was trying?

Perhaps Stephen's tone more than his words, told them that night what manner of man he in truth was, and how all that was petty and mean fell away from him and was no part of him.

"Do not think that I have refused to adopt your suggestion," Stephen began. "I have merely refused to consider it at all. I have chosen to ignore it, to treat it as if such a request had never been made. I am telling you this because I do not want you to have to bear the burden of enforcing your authority. You see, I quite agree that what you have asked of me is well within your authority, and it is not at all unusual in our church, yet I know that each of you must have felt the impossibility of it. You have defined your position and mine accurately. You are the Elders, and I the minister. Doubtless, you believe that because I am your minister, I owe it to you and to the Moravian Church as a whole, and to our church here on Staten Island in particular, to do as you direct. But I say to you that first, and before any of this, comes the duty I owe to my Father in Heaven, which is, that while I live, every act of mine shall be as good and as pure as there is wisdom in me

to find goodness and purity. It is because I would not be doing so that makes me refuse to consider your request that I share my life with a woman who has come into it for any reason such as that the Elders find that the work of the church would be benefited by it. The only one who is to share my life with me, is the one whom God shall send to me, and to whom I shall in turn be sent. Anything else is so wholly wrong that the right does not lie in you to ask it of me, any more than the right is in me to carry it out, should you ask. The wrong I would do to the woman would alone be enough to show you this, even though there were nothing else. And then there would be the wrong to the generations yet to be born. It is true that much happiness and good have come from the marriages among us that have been arranged by lot, but I have never been satisfied, nor could I ever believe. All that lifts human love up to the plane of that which is Divine, the love God has for us, must be kept sacred. You ask me to set this aside for the sake of our church. I cannot even let you ask. If you insist, I shall decline to accede to your request, no matter what the cost to the church or to you or to myself. Do not misunderstand me when I say that sometime in the life of each of you, you have stood face to face with all that I am saying now, and you know that it is true. Now that you see me standing here, and I tell you of these things which are most precious to me because I believe them to be part of God's love for me, which man among you is it who would lead me from the right way? Not you, Jacob Brevoort, nor you, Thomas Witte. Where do you

find peace, if you yourselves have done that which you want me to do? And where do you find happiness, if you have deceived your hearts into treasuring anything less worthy? I am sorry that you do not find me to be as the needs of the church here indicate to you that I should be. Since the day I first came among you, I have tried to be to you all that your minister should be, and more, and the mistakes I have made have not been those that come from indifference or because one does not try or does not care. And you, in your turn, in this little while, have been so good to me that it has been easy to learn to love each of you, to believe that I had become one among you and was no longer a stranger. I had hoped that you in turn had found it so with me. But all this must be set aside as we face what is before us to-night. If you are going to insist upon my taking under consideration the request you have made, you will make me say to you that I hold that you have no right to ask it of me, and that even if you have, and even for the church for which I am willing to do so much, I must refuse, once and for all. You cannot ask me to give myself where I do not love, just as none can ask me to love where God does not want me to. I am willing to abide by all this."

Always afterward, when he remembered that night, Stephen was glad that the thought of Dorothea made him speak with those men gently and quietly, as he had always done before. So that through the years there was nothing painful for him to recall of his own actions—nothing but sadness that all of this had to be, and that those good men should have suffered too,

with him. For they were suffering with him, as keenly as Stephen Lane himself, all except Peter Brevoort. Stephen had tried to speak as though Dorothea herself were there to hear every word. So it was always to be thereafter. He would never do anything that he would want to be different if, in truth, Dorothea were watching him, and watching, rejoiced because he tried to do it in the one way she would want, the right way. In the pause that followed Stephen's words, no one moved. At last Thomas Witte struggled to his feet and walked over and stood beside Stephen. How often is it thus, the heavy burden being borne eagerly by the one who in happier things would let others lead him.

"Stephen," he said, "lad, you have spoken as I wish a son of mine, had Providence thought I deserved one, would have done. You are right. What is more, we all know from our hearts that you are. For my own part, I am certain you have brought nothing but good to our church. Besides, you have done far more than anyone before you, than even we expected of you. We have no right to ask of you anything else, and most of all, even though the Moravian Church allows it, we have no right to ask this particular thing. You are right, Stephen Lane, I know that well, and so do the rest."

To some, Thomas Witte's stout, unprepossessing figure and his round face, flushed now with earnestness, would have been ludicrous. But Stephen saw only the kindly man and the gentle spirit that had hidden itself in that queer figure. And because now from the little eyes there were tears that ran quickly

down the round fat face and the heavy shoulders shook, Stephen understood and his heart was comforted. Stephen looked from one to the other of the Elders. Only Peter Brevoort refused to relax the sternness that had marked their faces. As for the rest, each showed plainly that Thomas Witte's words were his own.

John Blake came forward and took Stephen's hand, and the two men stood for a moment gazing frankly into each other's eyes.

"You are right, Stephen," he said, "but we must not let ourselves forget the church. Neither must we forget our duty toward it."

"That's it," interrupted Peter Brevoort, "our duty."

Stephen Lane turned toward him mildly, and the words he spoke were meant only for Peter Brevoort.

"Yes," he replied quietly, "it is of duty to the church that I am going to speak now. We cannot undo what has been done. The grace of God is shown to us even in this, for if men could change what has been done, they would use much less care in the doing, knowing that they could alter it all if they wished, and make it as it should have been. It is because we cannot that we must always weigh everything before it becomes unalterable. In this way only can we bring to others any happiness. The resolution has been spread on the records of this church, and two Elders have been appointed to apprise the minister of it. All of this, I say, has been done, and it is now no more possible to remove it from the records than it is to pretend it never happened. The answer of the

minister will go on the records too, there to stand, to-day and always. There it will remain, just the bare facts of the resolution and of the refusal of the minister to acquiesce. Even though none knew the cause that brought the resolution about or the reasons that made the minister refuse, it would still be harmful. There is but one course open to me. Otherwise, there is serious danger that is, I might say, almost inevitable, that the Elders and the church itself will lose influence, and the good it has done be lessened too. It is for this reason that I ask to have it recorded that I, the minister, in response to the resolution sent me by the Elders, have this day resigned as your minister. There is no other way to meet the issue, for if I merely refused to do your bidding, it would become but a test of strength in which one of us must needs be the weaker, the loss in the end falling on our beloved church."

When he ceased speaking, there came expostulations from those about him. Stephen heard Thomas Knox's shrill voice saying:

"You shall not do it, Stephen Lane!"

But Stephen only smiled back at them.

"I am sorry," he said, "more sorry than I would have you know. I have thought it all over and it is clear to my mind that there can be no other way. It will take you some time to find another minister. I will stay as long as you think I should, until Fall, if need be, until you have the man who fills the requirements more nearly. Then I will go away."

Stephen watched the effect of his words on the different men. He saw Thomas Witte shaking his head

slowly from side to side. Peter Brevoort did not relax in the attitude that had been his since Stephen Lane entered the great kitchen of his house.

Jacob Brevoort held his peace through all of this, as does a wise man. He saw clearly, as did Stephen, that the harm had been done. And though he did not know why, he suspected that his brother, and in some way, Alen Therwith, had brought this about. He believed that he had found Alen's reason for wanting Stephen to go. But it was too late now to speculate about it. Sooner or later the congregation would know, and Stephen's hold over them be lessened, should Stephen still stay among them, for idle tongues sow seeds of mistrust eagerly, and Jacob Brevoort knew that all Staten Island would gossip eagerly about the conflict of authority in the Moravian Church. Nor could Stephen repair the harm. Peter Brevoort, for one, Jacob knew, would never let himself forget that Stephen had triumphed over him. So Jacob Brevoort knew Stephen had decided wisely.

That night the Elders and Stephen agreed that the change should be made, but that Stephen should stay with them until such time as the new minister was found. Meanwhile, they pledged themselves to secrecy as to their meeting and the results, believing that when the time for the change came, it would be soon enough for the circumstances to become known.

When at last they turned to go, they shook hands with Stephen Lane again, but sorrowfully this time.

Stephen felt that in gaining his point with the Elders, he had taken the first step in the sacrifice he was called upon to make. None knew all that his

work meant to him, and he himself had not known how Dorothea was woven into it all, nor how far she inspired all that he did, so that no day was too long and no work too hard for him, lest he should pass by some little thing and so be less worthy than she would have had him be. Oh, that Stephen might not have had to bear this. Oh, that Dorothea might have been spared, too. The wish and hope that was uppermost in the heart of each of them was only that all might be well for the other. Stephen wanted (as did Dorothea in turn for him) that she should find happiness. It would have been enough for him to know that no harm came to her. This is what it means to love truly. This is what it means for unselfishness to lift affection above the sordid plane of self-seeking where men sometimes want to make it dwell, that they may demand every fulfilment that their desire can devise.

The white house on the Iron Hill had long been quiet. In the great kitchen, the fire that blazed so bravely through the long meeting of the Elders had died now, till there was nothing but a glow among the grey ashes on the hearth. Dorothea opened the door of her room and stole along the hall to her uncle's room where the light was still burning. Jacob Brevoort was seated by the table. He smiled at Dorothea, and for a moment the anxious expression faded from her face as she smiled back at him.

"Why aren't you in bed long ago, little girl?" he asked.

"I have been, Uncle Jacob," she replied, "only I could not sleep. I want you to tell me what all this mystery is about. Why were they here to-night, and

slowly from side to side. Peter Brevoort did not relax in the attitude that had been his since Stephen Lane entered the great kitchen of his house.

Jacob Brevoort held his peace through all of this, as does a wise man. He saw clearly, as did Stephen, that the harm had been done. And though he did not know why, he suspected that his brother, and in some way, Alen Therwith, had brought this about. He believed that he had found Alen's reason for wanting Stephen to go. But it was too late now to speculate about it. Sooner or later the congregation would know, and Stephen's hold over them be lessened, should Stephen still stay among them, for idle tongues sow seeds of mistrust eagerly, and Jacob Brevoort knew that all Staten Island would gossip eagerly about the conflict of authority in the Moravian Church. Nor could Stephen repair the harm. Peter Brevoort, for one, Jacob knew, would never let himself forget that Stephen had triumphed over him. So Jacob Brevoort knew Stephen had decided wisely.

That night the Elders and Stephen agreed that the change should be made, but that Stephen should stay with them until such time as the new minister was found. Meanwhile, they pledged themselves to secrecy as to their meeting and the results, believing that when the time for the change came, it would be soon enough for the circumstances to become known.

When at last they turned to go, they shook hands with Stephen Lane again, but sorrowfully this time.

Stephen felt that in gaining his point with the Elders, he had taken the first step in the sacrifice he was called upon to make. None knew all that his

work meant to him, and he himself had not known how Dorothea was woven into it all, nor how far she inspired all that he did, so that no day was too long and no work too hard for him, lest he should pass by some little thing and so be less worthy than she would have had him be. Oh, that Stephen might not have had to bear this. Oh, that Dorothea might have been spared, too. The wish and hope that was uppermost in the heart of each of them was only that all might be well for the other. Stephen wanted (as did Dorothea in turn for him) that she should find happiness. It would have been enough for him to know that no harm came to her. This is what it means to love truly. This is what it means for unselfishness to lift affection above the sordid plane of self-seeking where men sometimes want to make it dwell, that they may demand every fulfilment that their desire can devise.

The white house on the Iron Hill had long been quiet. In the great kitchen, the fire that blazed so bravely through the long meeting of the Elders had died now, till there was nothing but a glow among the grey ashes on the hearth. Dorothea opened the door of her room and stole along the hall to her uncle's room where the light was still burning. Jacob Brevoort was seated by the table. He smiled at Dorothea, and for a moment the anxious expression faded from her face as she smiled back at him.

"Why aren't you in bed long ago, little girl?" he asked.

"I have been, Uncle Jacob," she replied, "only I could not sleep. I want you to tell me what all this mystery is about. Why were they here to-night, and

slowly from side to side. Peter Brevoort did not relax in the attitude that had been his since Stephen Lane entered the great kitchen of his house.

Jacob Brevoort held his peace through all of this, as does a wise man. He saw clearly, as did Stephen, that the harm had been done. And though he did not know why, he suspected that his brother, and in some way, Alen Therwith, had brought this about. He believed that he had found Alen's reason for wanting Stephen to go. But it was too late now to speculate about it. Sooner or later the congregation would know, and Stephen's hold over them be lessened, should Stephen still stay among them, for idle tongues sow seeds of mistrust eagerly, and Jacob Brevoort knew that all Staten Island would gossip eagerly about the conflict of authority in the Moravian Church. Nor could Stephen repair the harm. Peter Brevoort, for one, Jacob knew, would never let himself forget that Stephen had triumphed over him. So Jacob Brevoort knew Stephen had decided wisely.

That night the Elders and Stephen agreed that the change should be made, but that Stephen should stay with them until such time as the new minister was found. Meanwhile, they pledged themselves to secrecy as to their meeting and the results, believing that when the time for the change came, it would be soon enough for the circumstances to become known.

When at last they turned to go, they shook hands with Stephen Lane again, but sorrowfully this time.

Stephen felt that in gaining his point with the Elders, he had taken the first step in the sacrifice he was called upon to make. None knew all that his

work meant to him, and he himself had not known how Dorothea was woven into it all, nor how far she inspired all that he did, so that no day was too long and no work too hard for him, lest he should pass by some little thing and so be less worthy than she would have had him be. Oh, that Stephen might not have had to bear this. Oh, that Dorothea might have been spared, too. The wish and hope that was uppermost in the heart of each of them was only that all might be well for the other. Stephen wanted (as did Dorothea in turn for him) that she should find happiness. It would have been enough for him to know that no harm came to her. This is what it means to love truly. This is what it means for unselfishness to lift affection above the sordid plane of self-seeking where men sometimes want to make it dwell, that they may demand every fulfilment that their desire can devise.

The white house on the Iron Hill had long been quiet. In the great kitchen, the fire that blazed so bravely through the long meeting of the Elders had died now, till there was nothing but a glow among the grey ashes on the hearth. Dorothea opened the door of her room and stole along the hall to her uncle's room where the light was still burning. Jacob Brevoort was seated by the table. He smiled at Dorothea, and for a moment the anxious expression faded from her face as she smiled back at him.

"Why aren't you in bed long ago, little girl?" he asked.

"I have been, Uncle Jacob," she replied, "only I could not sleep. I want you to tell me what all this mystery is about. Why were they here to-night, and

slowly from side to side. Peter Brevoort did not relax in the attitude that had been his since Stephen Lane entered the great kitchen of his house.

Jacob Brevoort held his peace through all of this, as does a wise man. He saw clearly, as did Stephen, that the harm had been done. And though he did not know why, he suspected that his brother, and in some way, Alen Therwith, had brought this about. He believed that he had found Alen's reason for wanting Stephen to go. But it was too late now to speculate about it. Sooner or later the congregation would know, and Stephen's hold over them be lessened, should Stephen still stay among them, for idle tongues sow seeds of mistrust eagerly, and Jacob Brevoort knew that all Staten Island would gossip eagerly about the conflict of authority in the Moravian Church. Nor could Stephen repair the harm. Peter Brevoort, for one, Jacob knew, would never let himself forget that Stephen had triumphed over him. So Jacob Brevoort knew Stephen had decided wisely.

That night the Elders and Stephen agreed that the change should be made, but that Stephen should stay with them until such time as the new minister was found. Meanwhile, they pledged themselves to secrecy as to their meeting and the results, believing that when the time for the change came, it would be soon enough for the circumstances to become known.

When at last they turned to go, they shook hands with Stephen Lane again, but sorrowfully this time.

Stephen felt that in gaining his point with the Elders, he had taken the first step in the sacrifice he was called upon to make. None knew all that his

work meant to him, and he himself had not known how Dorothea was woven into it all, nor how far she inspired all that he did, so that no day was too long and no work too hard for him, lest he should pass by some little thing and so be less worthy than she would have had him be. Oh, that Stephen might not have had to bear this. Oh, that Dorothea might have been spared, too. The wish and hope that was uppermost in the heart of each of them was only that all might be well for the other. Stephen wanted (as did Dorothea in turn for him) that she should find happiness. It would have been enough for him to know that no harm came to her. This is what it means to love truly. This is what it means for unselfishness to lift affection above the sordid plane of self-seeking where men sometimes want to make it dwell, that they may demand every fulfilment that their desire can devise.

The white house on the Iron Hill had long been quiet. In the great kitchen, the fire that blazed so bravely through the long meeting of the Elders had died now, till there was nothing but a glow among the grey ashes on the hearth. Dorothea opened the door of her room and stole along the hall to her uncle's room where the light was still burning. Jacob Brevoort was seated by the table. He smiled at Dorothea, and for a moment the anxious expression faded from her face as she smiled back at him.

"Why aren't you in bed long ago, little girl?" he asked.

"I have been, Uncle Jacob," she replied, "only I could not sleep. I want you to tell me what all this mystery is about. Why were they here to-night, and

slowly from side to side. Peter Brevoort did not relax in the attitude that had been his since Stephen Lane entered the great kitchen of his house.

Jacob Brevoort held his peace through all of this, as does a wise man. He saw clearly, as did Stephen, that the harm had been done. And though he did not know why, he suspected that his brother, and in some way, Alen Therwith, had brought this about. He believed that he had found Alen's reason for wanting Stephen to go. But it was too late now to speculate about it. Sooner or later the congregation would know, and Stephen's hold over them be lessened, should Stephen still stay among them, for idle tongues sow seeds of mistrust eagerly, and Jacob Brevoort knew that all Staten Island would gossip eagerly about the conflict of authority in the Moravian Church. Nor could Stephen repair the harm. Peter Brevoort, for one, Jacob knew, would never let himself forget that Stephen had triumphed over him. So Jacob Brevoort knew Stephen had decided wisely.

That night the Elders and Stephen agreed that the change should be made, but that Stephen should stay with them until such time as the new minister was found. Meanwhile, they pledged themselves to secrecy as to their meeting and the results, believing that when the time for the change came, it would be soon enough for the circumstances to become known.

When at last they turned to go, they shook hands with Stephen Lane again, but sorrowfully this time.

Stephen felt that in gaining his point with the Elders, he had taken the first step in the sacrifice he was called upon to make. None knew all that his

work meant to him, and he himself had not known how Dorothea was woven into it all, nor how far she inspired all that he did, so that no day was too long and no work too hard for him, lest he should pass by some little thing and so be less worthy than she would have had him be. Oh, that Stephen might not have had to bear this. Oh, that Dorothea might have been spared, too. The wish and hope that was uppermost in the heart of each of them was only that all might be well for the other. Stephen wanted (as did Dorothea in turn for him) that she should find happiness. It would have been enough for him to know that no harm came to her. This is what it means to love truly. This is what it means for unselfishness to lift affection above the sordid plane of self-seeking where men sometimes want to make it dwell, that they may demand every fulfilment that their desire can devise.

The white house on the Iron Hill had long been quiet. In the great kitchen, the fire that blazed so bravely through the long meeting of the Elders had died now, till there was nothing but a glow among the grey ashes on the hearth. Dorothea opened the door of her room and stole along the hall to her uncle's room where the light was still burning. Jacob Brevoort was seated by the table. He smiled at Dorothea, and for a moment the anxious expression faded from her face as she smiled back at him.

"Why aren't you in bed long ago, little girl?" he asked.

"I have been, Uncle Jacob," she replied, "only I could not sleep. I want you to tell me what all this mystery is about. Why were they here to-night, and

why was Stephen—I mean Mr. Lane—why was he here? I am so afraid that something is wrong. Father is so stern and so mistaken, sometimes. You will tell me, won't you, Uncle Jacob?"

She seated herself close beside him on a low chair. Jacob Brevoort put his hand on her head and smoothed back the soft shining hair. Always she had come to him thus, and had always gone away comforted. As a little child she had often thought it was too bad that her Uncle Jacob had no children of his own, for she was sure that he would love them so. Now she rested her head against his rough coat and waited for him to speak. Surely in all Staten Island, there were no two hearts more loving than those of Dorothea and her uncle. Nor could a man try harder to tell her what he might without distressing her, than did Jacob Brevoort that night. His face was as gentle as a woman's, and the arms that held Dorothea close to him made the girl feel so secure, so safe, that all the doubts that had harassed her and made sleep impossible, were quite banished.

"Why, you see, Dorothea," he said, "I think Stephen finds it wiser that none of us should discuss the things the Elders and he have been trying to decide. My little girl can be sure that there is nothing for her to worry about."

"But, Uncle Jacob," said Dorothea, "I have been so afraid that someone was finding fault with Stephen or his work. It would be unjust if they did, but people are so eager always to criticise their minister. It would hurt Stephen so to learn of it, no matter how mistaken it all was. He might even want

to go away, to go somewhere else, in the belief that he had been at fault, and that he must begin again. It isn't that, is it, Uncle Jacob? You would tell me if he were going away, even though you had promised not to, wouldn't you, Uncle Jacob?"

But Jacob Brevoort was silent. He watched the anxiety cloud Dorothea's eyes again as her arms crept about his neck, and she drew his head closer to hers.

"Why don't you answer me, Uncle Jacob?"

The apprehension was growing now to almost a certainty.

"Tell me!" she implored.

But Jacob Brevoort only shook his head.

"You mustn't ask me, Dorothea," he said. "I am not free to tell."

He felt a tremor run through the girl's frame, and the arms about his neck tightened at the words.

"I suppose you would tell me if you thought it right," she said sadly. "Somehow, I just know that I have guessed, and that Stephen is going away. Something, someone is making him go. Don't make me say it, Uncle Jacob. Just guess what a difference it makes to me. I cannot hide from you that it does."

Jacob Brevoort's hand sought the girl's head again caressingly, and his voice was wonderfully gentle.

"My little girl," he whispered, "my dear little girl, I cannot tell you any of these things. But I can tell you that Stephen is right in what he is doing, in what he is going to do. It wouldn't be too hard for you or for him, either, if he knew——"

"But he must not know!" she exclaimed. "He

must never know! I can't bear the thought of it. You must promise me not to tell. You will promise, won't you, Uncle Jacob?"

Yet she knew her alarm was unnecessary, though it comforted her to hear his kind voice saying:

"No one shall keep your secret safer than I, Dorothea."

Then the sorrow of it all came over her, and she hid her face in her hands. But Dorothea was not one to accept even the inevitable without learning fully what must be borne.

"I will ask Stephen myself," she said. "You don't think that would be wrong, do you, Uncle Jacob?"

"But he will not tell you, Dorothea."

"Ah, but he will," said Dorothea. And hope brought the smiles back again.

"There, there," she said, "I have been bothering you with my little troubles, and keeping you up besides. You will lose your beauty sleep, Uncle Jacob, unless you go to bed now."

Again the warm, soft arms stole round his neck, and the cheek that was old and hard and wrinkled because of the years of loneliness, found Dorothea's own smooth cheek against it. So they remained for a moment without a word. Then she kissed him lightly on the forehead.

CHAPTER XV.

RED LANE

WHEN Dorothea left her uncle, she had made the firm resolve that she would get Stephen to tell her. She had but to ask, Dorothea told herself, and the mystery, all that her Uncle Jacob would not tell her, would be made plain. The thought made Dorothea almost happy again.

After she had gone to bed, Dorothea refused to let her mind dwell on any of the uncertainties. She put them all bravely away, and in their stead thought only of the precious talks she and Stephen had had of his work. Never had Dorothea dreamed of such happiness as her heart found in those few times when she planned with Stephen some of the good he was to do. To be young so that the hope of achievement is still strong, brings happiness, yet how little, beside that which comes where a man and woman try together to help each other. Thus it had been with them.

Dorothea rejoiced because Stephen was always hopeful. She knew that there was no such thing as discouragement to him. So when she saw him tomorrow, she would have but to ask and then he would point out to her in his cheerful, resolute way, just what the difficulties had been. Yet the doubt came when she realised that only some momentous reason could make him change all that she knew he had

planned. Dorothea realised in part how her own suggestions influenced Stephen in trying to make the most of himself. How glad she had been when he had put before her so much of all he proposed to do in his work, that after a time she might see it accomplished. What had happened to change all this? Dorothea turned uneasily in her bed. She wanted to talk with Stephen now. She had not remembered that the long night and a day of work must come first. The sun would be low again over the hills, marking the close of another day before she would be free. Even then, because she needed so to find Stephen, it might be just as on so many other days that they were fated to miss each other. How was she to bear it if it happened again? Dorothea told herself quite firmly that it would not be, yet in spite of her effort to comfort herself with the thought, the waiting was as always the hardest part, even for a woman, with whom so much of the time must be spent in waiting.

How quiet the house was, and how alone Dorothea felt herself to be. In spite of her courage, the little fears came creeping into her heart again, unreasonable fears that she told herself would be banished with the coming of day. In the darkness of the night, Dorothea counted the slow passing of the minutes while her imagination twisted even the comforting things until she could find nowhere anything to which she could cling with certainty. Stephen would go away. She must prepare herself for that. It would be far away, where there would be new work and new people. Nor would Stephen ever guess the difference it made to her, and she would have to let

him go away thinking it made none. Yet as always, when she needed help, Dorothea's heart turned simply and trustfully as a child's, to God. How many women do just this, when their hearts are burdened with the sorrows that only some women and so few men are good enough to know? Dorothea put away the yearning that made her want to be with Stephen that very moment, sharing the sorrow (for she knew it was sorrow to him) bearing it together, asking God together for the strength they needed. How could she endure having him alone through the long night, even as she was alone? But it did not matter about her, if only Stephen might be comforted. Then Dorothea tried to be glad that it did make no difference to Stephen whether she cared or not. It was better that only she should have this burden. It was enough that he should have to work out all the changes that had come to his plans. She knew, too, that Stephen had borne more than his share of the strain of these meetings. Perhaps her own father had been harsh with him. In spite of the love that made her cling to her father, she could not hide from herself that night a feeling almost of distrust. Often a heart that has kept its own innocence knows by instinct where there is danger, not to itself, perhaps, but to some other heart that it wants to shield. Nor could she banish the thought that perhaps Alen Therwith had something to do with it all. It became almost a certainty as she contemplated what Alen might do. Suppose he suspected how closely all that touched Stephen touched Dorothea too? There is no novelty in a simple, trusting heart finding itself perplexed at the

cross-purposes and hidden interests all about it, till at last it is baffled and afraid when it finds it must confront strong natures that desire nothing but their own selfish ends.

How well she knew Alen's masterful way; how he rode over everybody and everything. Yet she saw with perfect clearness that his way was not Stephen's, and that his progress was less sure than that which Stephen made with the same people. How often she had been proud and happy because of their love for Stephen. Dorothea had seen rough men do Alen's bidding with an alacrity that told of their fear of him. Yet once she had seen one of these very men come to Stephen Lane, and standing with his hat in his hand, and the tears running down his bronzed cheek, tell Stephen of the sick wife at home who wanted him. Stephen had put his hand on the man's shoulder and spoken to him quietly and aside, so that even she had not heard. And a little later, when Stephen and the man went away together, Dorothea had seen that the latter was comforted. Dorothea did not need to be told what this meant, for her own heart knew better than anyone else in all the world, the gentleness and tenderness that made Stephen what he was.

At last Dorothea slept, but her dreams were always of finding Stephen, or of dread because she could not. When she woke, she found that she had been crying in her sleep.

Even that winter night came to an end at last. It was a quiet, brave Dorothea that started forth in the early morning, down the hill to the schoolhouse, to the day's work, to Stephen and the ending of her

doubts. The wintry air brought the colour to the girl's cheek, and courage to her heart, so that she smiled at the fears that had gone with the passing of the night. She was sure Stephen would tell her, and more than that, he would tell her that it was all a mistake, that he had no thought of going away, that everything was to go on as before. If that were true, Dorothea told herself it would be enough and more—she would never ask for anything through the days to come. The happiness would be so wonderful that she could go on trying in all that she had to do—winning her father's love, being brave and unselfish in all things.

If it were true that Stephen was to stay, how easy all these other things would be. There would be no task that her father might set for her that would be too hard. Dorothea did not think of Alen Therwith when she told herself that. Nevertheless, the unselfishness that made Dorothea what she was carried her a step farther. If it were better for Stephen, if he could find greater happiness somewhere else, she would make herself bear even that, but God would not let such a thing happen.

Many winter mornings have come and gone since that one so long ago, when Dorothea Brevoort started from the white house on the Iron Hill to the little schoolhouse, and many days have dawned as grey and cold and cheerless as did that one. A leaden sky and a leaden sea matched the bare trees and the frozen earth, for there was no snow. Along Red Lane the trees were blue. Dorothea walked rapidly down the side of the Iron Hill. She had to pass Stephen's house to reach the King's Highway. Nor would any-

one have guessed that her eyes saw anything but the frozen land spread out before her, and the sea and the grey sky. Yet in truth she saw none of this, for her heart was wondering where Stephen was. The thought that he might see her as she passed only made her walk more rapidly, as if fearing, should he see, he would guess her thoughts.

That day, everything about her work seemed to go wrong. Try as she would, Dorothea could not keep the hours from dragging endlessly. She brought to bear upon it all only a greater patience than she had ever shown before. It is just this that it means to be brave—to show but a greater forbearance, to control one's self but the more, the greater the provocation. But at last the time came when the work was ended, and the children started on their homeward way. Mary and Dorothea went across the level land together. The clouds that had hung grey and even over the land all that day were darker now. It was cold, too, and Dorothea drew her cloak more closely about her, as though the chill was beginning to take her courage from her. As they neared the Blake homestead, Mary said:

“Dorothea, I am afraid something is the matter, that you are not well. You must let me go home with you to-day.”

This could never be.

“No, indeed!” replied Dorothea, “I am quite well. I ought to stop at your house and help you, instead of your thinking of going home with me.”

Perhaps Mary guessed something of all that troubled Dorothea. Not that she knew anything of

Stephen's expected departure, but these two were such old friends, and Mary's generous heart knew the other so well, that perhaps she guessed. At any rate, when she told Dorothea good-night, Mary drew her friend close and kissed her, which, in spite of her warm heart, was a very unusual proceeding for Mary Blake.

Dorothea went on alone. The way was clear now, yet the hope that she would meet Stephen was almost gone. But there was absolutely nothing she could do to bring it about. She could only ask God that it might be, that she might learn what she needed to know, not only for her own sake, but for Stephen's as well.

How short the winter afternoon was! It was almost night now. The leaves that had been so red in the November days were brown and dry, and rustled on the bare ground, as Dorothea's gown touched them in passing. She walked more slowly, for she was in Red Lane now, and she would soon be home, and there was no sign of Stephen. Perhaps the day with its sombre colours was to match—but no, there was Stephen coming down Red Lane.

It seemed to Dorothea afterward that his face was more stern and determined than she had ever seen it before. It was a little bit sad, too. But when he greeted her, there was the quiet smile and the voice to make her happy, just because she could hear it, because it told her how safe everything was.

Because there was no way for Dorothea other than the simple, true, direct way, she scarcely paused to greet him.

"What have all the meetings been for?" she asked. "You are not going away, are you? Uncle Jacob would not tell me."

Stephen looked down at her.

"It is quite true," he said slowly, "I am going away."

They had been standing side by side, and now Dorothea turned away. She tried to tell herself that she could not have heard him aright, but her heart knew the truth, and of a sudden grew heavy and faint, as if there were come upon it in that instant the realisation that this moment was the beginning of all the loneliness their parting would mean.

Stephen never knew what it cost Dorothea to turn again to him and lift her eyes to his—the truthful eyes that would have told him Dorothea's secret then, had not his own been too heavy with the burden to see. But she did turn to him and her lips asked bravely what her heart must know.

"Why are you going?" she said.

It was this question that Stephen had feared. He had told himself that Dorothea should never know, or at least, not until long after he had gone. She should never know what had happened the night before in her own home, or on that other night when Thaddeus Knox and Thomas Witte had called upon him with the request from the Elders. Yet now Dorothea had asked him. Oh, that she had! How could he answer? How could he keep from telling her that which he had hidden successfully from the Elders themselves? It had been easy to tell them that they had no right to ask what they had asked, but he knew he could not tell

Dorothea that. If he began, the whole miserable truth would come out—the fact that Stephen Lane was not strong enough to stay near her, that Alen Therwith—but he must not go on, even in thought. Stephen found himself groping about for some answer. Then he heard the dear voice again.

“Why are you going away?”

There was a new tone in Dorothea’s voice as she repeated the question, one that made Stephen himself again, gave him back the strength to bear all the burden alone, for the tone was of one who has courage, who is unselfish, who asks only to help, to comfort and to bless. Stephen knew now that he would not fail Dorothea.

“I am sorry,” he said, and his voice trembled just a little bit. It was the first time he had ever refused Dorothea his confidence, yet what could he do now, other than this?

“I am sorry,” he said again, trying to speak bravely, “but I cannot tell you.”

Where they were standing they could see through the bare trees of Red Lane the white house on the Iron Hill. All about them it was still and cold. How well it matched the sorrow that had fallen on their hearts! In the frozen land and the grey sky there was no comfort, even as their hearts could find none. There was something almost physical in the pain that came to each of them, robbing them of everything save the knowledge of it and the desire to hide it lest the other should find it harder still.

But the worst was not yet. Dorothea turned toward Stephen again. The tears rose in her eyes

and dropped down on her cloak. But she was not ashamed. Her heart would not let her be with Stephen.

"I suppose," she said sadly, "that it is right I should not know."

Stephen was silent. To have Dorothea thus troubled was more than he could stand. He had never thought for an instant that she would know until the time had come for him to go. It was to Stephen's credit that he did not guess that it was for his sake that she was asking these things. He believed that Dorothea was sad and heavy-hearted merely because of something she did not understand. His heart wanted to comfort Dorothea, to dry the tears, to bring the dear smile back again, to cherish and love her as no one else could. To a man more selfish, there would have been made plain that afternoon in Red Lane that which Stephen did not see, nor did Dorothea. The love God gives to a man and woman is a good love that is not forever and eternally seeking to gratify its own desire. Instead, it thinks only of the happiness of the one it loves. This is the beauty of affection. This is what makes all else valueless beside the only treasure the world has.

Stephen and Dorothea walked blindly that afternoon, when just a word would have caused all these hard things to vanish in an instant and forever. Yet it was well, for the time was not yet. Blessed, blessed time, if it was to come, blessed because of this day and the other days that have been hard and long and lonely, for it is only thus that the heart can be made ready for its happiness.

How little are spoken words needed! Since they met, their words had been but few, yet neither Dorothea nor Stephen was conscious of whether they had spoken much or little. Dorothea, now that Stephen made no reply, could endure it no longer. Her voice was so low that when she spoke, Stephen stooped to catch the words.

"I want to be quite alone," she whispered. "Will you please leave me now?"

The voice was almost lost, and the words came very slowly as the sentence ended. Stephen turned to go. It was all still harder now. Oh, Dorothea, standing there with your head bowed and the bright hair low upon your cheek and ear, with your arms holding your schoolbooks, and the cloak still wet where the tears had fallen! Oh, lonely, solitary little figure, almost crushed with the weight that has fallen upon it! Stephen's love rose up at the sight and cried out aloud against it, longing to put his arms about her, to keep it all away, to stand between her and whatever it was that had made her come to him that afternoon.

For a long moment, neither moved. Then Stephen went down the Lane the way they had come. As long as Dorothea heard his footsteps, she did not move. Then when he was quite gone, she turned slowly away and continued up the Lane. But now it was such a different figure from the one that had started out so bravely that morning. In spite of herself, Dorothea's head was bowed and her shoulders drooped and the step that had been so free was slower now, and the eyes saw only the frozen path before her.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH STEPHEN IS ALONE

WHEN Stephen left Dorothea, he would not let himself pause, but hastened down Red Lane lest after all he should fail her and go back in spite of her request. To think that the day should have come in which Dorothea found it necessary to ask him to leave her! He did not try to guess why. It was enough for him to know that she wanted to be alone. He did not need to be told that there was nothing he could do or that she could want him to do to help her. To think of the wrong he had done her not to be able to tell her, to have to keep from her that which she asked to know. Stephen remembered again with bitterness that it was the very first time she had asked his confidence. It was the only time she had ever come to him for anything whatsoever, unless, indeed, he could count Alen Therwith's coming on that eventful night as but Dorothea speaking through the one whom she had chosen to send, the only one she could choose, if she were to ask Stephen about such a thing.

The grey dusk of a winter's night had fallen over the land. Of a sudden he felt the courage go from him leaving no warmth in his heart even as there was none in the cold night air about him.

"Stephen Lane," he said to himself severely, "it is well for you that this has happened, that you have

seen Dorothea but for this once. She will never ask you about it again, so you will not be tempted to share this with her. Just see how your resolution faltered and almost fell, in your rejoicing at meeting her this afternoon!" Stephen loathed himself as never before. He recalled with what pride he had told himself that he alone, of them all, understood Dorothea and knew with what gentleness her own gentle self must be guarded, so that it could trust without fear. Yet when she asked him a simple question, just as the others of his congregation in the days to come would ask this very same thing, he had seen fit to act the boy instead of the man. Why could he not have told Dorothea what he must tell the others when they should come, sooner or later, with the same question? Stephen's heart knew the reason well, but he would not let himself listen. He could only go over and over again the bitter thought that she would despise him now. As he walked on through the darkness, where he neither knew nor cared, he told himself that he was glad, and that the sooner Dorothea forgot, the better. At least, that would be the easier way for her.

The brisk exercise in the cold air made Stephen's blood move swiftly again through his body. It brought him back to himself, giving him courage and something like hope. A new thought that he could not banish came to him. Why had Dorothea come? What difference did it make to her? Why should she want to know of these things? Then the mistaken, morbid notion of fault in him, made Stephen feel that he was doing Dorothea a greater wrong

than ever. Why should he seek to attribute to her anything other than the simple, straightforward way in which she invariably approached even the most trivial matter? In his self-abasement, Stephen thought he saw how unfair to Dorothea his thoughts were.

"There is one thing at least," said Stephen to himself, "that I have not made up out of my imagination, and that is all that Alen Therwith said to me. That at least, is real and definite, and not to be mistaken."

There would be no misunderstanding on his part over Dorothea's asking him why he was going away. Stephen was disgusted at his own conceit that was making him try to find something for himself in this simple happening. And then, just as he succeeded in crowding all of it from his mind, there came the recollection of Dorothea as she turned toward him with the tears dropping upon her cloak. Stephen's heart leaped at the recollection.

"She does care, Stephen," it said, "your going makes the same difference to her that it does to you."

In an instant all of Stephen's harshness toward himself was swept away, and with it his fallacious reasoning. Stephen had made the not unusual mistake of one who is trying to be unselfish, of so schooling himself to the hard tasks that lay before him that he sought to repress that which should not have been repressed, but should, instead, have been made a source of infinite comfort to him through the years.

"It is all too late," he said aloud to the darkness, "quite too late. It has all been done now, and there can be no going back."

The finality of his own words was almost a relief to him. It made it easier for him to turn again toward the little house beside the church, toward the long night with the hours of work. He was glad now that Dorothea had come to the knowledge of these things only after they had been accomplished. He was quite sure that he would have failed to bear his part, had Dorothea known of each successive step. Had she known, their talk that day in Red Lane would never have been possible. Stephen knew it was not wise to speculate as to why she had sought him there, yet the bare fact of her coming comforted him more than all the rest. The belief that all of this made no difference to Dorothea was making it easier for him to start anew, to go away and to begin his struggle alone, for he would leave Dorothea among those who loved her and whom she loved, to a long, happy life in the white house on the Iron Hill, to days as sunny as any Red Lane had known. It was this thought, Stephen told himself, he must cling to. Through all the years he would comfort himself with the knowledge that he had gone away and left Dorothea to the happiness that was to be hers, even though he was no part of it.

He had reached his house now, and his step was as resolute as always. Perhaps it was because it was a man's way. Perhaps it was only because it was Stephen Lane's way of showing himself all that he thought he must do. Be that as it may, the courage was quite gone, when once again the lamp was burning in the little study. Over him there came all the emptiness that the little house held whenever its

master was there alone. Stephen Lane knew well the few times in his life in which he had not been alone. They, too, were quite gone, and forever, nor could he hope for any more. Indeed, he was not sure but that the next time they met, Dorothea would be glad to pass him by without even a word. He pretended to hope that it would be so, for then Dorothea would find it so much easier. Stephen tried to rejoice over it. It would be enough that he alone should be heavy-hearted. More than this, any added kindness that Dorothea in her generosity might give to him would, in the end, but make the way the harder. It was easier to begin now, and because of the years to come, a few days or weeks more or less at the beginning could not make any difference.

Stephen was no longer able to sit in his easy chair and think quietly. Forgetting all else, he walked up and down while the long hours came and went. At last, through sheer exhaustion, he sought his chair again and, closing his eyes, slept at last.

The little house that was Stephen Lane's has long since gone, and with it the recollection of those other times. Yet to those who care, is given the power still to see him sitting there as on that night, with his head thrown back till it rested against the chair, and the yellow lamplight falling full upon his strong features, quiet at last in their repose, quiet after their long struggle against what Stephen mistakenly thought was wrong. After a time, a deeper, quieter rest came to Stephen, and a peace that he had not known for many a night made him sleep as does a

little child. Who shall say, though even now the long years have taken reality from it all, that there did not come down through the darkness of that night from the white house on the Iron Hill to the little one beside the church, that which alone could comfort Stephen's heart?

CHAPTER XVII

NIGHT

IF we could, it would be happier to leave Dorothea there in Red Lane, as Stephen did. Were this but a story, we would be free to do so, to pass it over and go to other and happier adventures. But if we have come to know Dorothea Brevoort as we should, we will want to go on with her through it all, and our only sorrow will be that we cannot comfort her.

The meaning of the word loneliness varies with the tenderness and understanding of the heart to which it has come. As that heart is pure and true, so there is added to its loneliness much which never disturbs a less worthy one. All the sensitiveness, all the tenderness, but makes the loneliness deeper, adding to it untold agony. Thus it is that the selfish, through their own self-satisfaction and pride, spare themselves the hurt of it all. It is for this reason that those who are selfish never rise to the heights of lasting happiness, for they have never learned that to be happy means to be unselfish, and that the happiness varies as the unselfishness that makes it.

For the first few moments after Stephen left her there in Red Lane, Dorothea was conscious neither of things about her nor of any thought other than the one that overpowered and thrust out everything else—that Stephen was to go away. Nor did she then

fathom what it meant to her, or think of the endless days. There would be time enough for such thoughts. Slowly Dorothea started up Red Lane, a little forlorn figure making its way homeward through the winter twilight, as though each step was more than she had strength to take. As she went, the way grew longer, for now mind and heart joined together in making her conscious of all that was to come. Yet it was not pity for herself that was the burden of this moment to Dorothea. Nor must such an injustice be done her as to believe that it was. Dorothea was not thinking of herself at all. It was of the hard way that Stephen was finding he must go alone, where she would be utterly separated from him and from all chance of helping even in the little ways she had found that she could. Dorothea did not let herself imagine that there was anything she could do to help Stephen Lane. It was only that she wanted to, that her heart was eager to find some way to make it easier for him. She could not bear the pain of finding a barrier across their way now.

Through the years, those who know it have watched from the sea the low land where lies Red Lane, with the three great elms marking it at the point where it touches the beach. Beyond are the hills with the white house against the green of the trees. Sometimes the bright morning light is over it all, but it is most beautiful to those who love it best when night is coming and over the water everywhere it is grey and lonely, and over Red Lane and the hills beyond darkness is gathering thickly, and there is only a faint glimmer of day left to guide one's way. So it must

have been on that winter afternoon when Dorothea Brevoort reached the foot of the hill and began the weary climb up from the King's Highway to the white house. She made her way slowly indeed, as though she had scarcely enough strength to gain the ascent. She remembered now all that Stephen must give up, the hopes, the work, everything. She knew them all so well, for they had become her own hopes. For some mysterious reason, Dorothea connected that which had happened with herself. It was all so unfair to Stephen, so wrong, after all he had done and tried to do. The hopes, the plans, Stephen's eagerness—Dorothea knew it all so well. How could he give them up?

Dorothea was quite afraid to go home. She did not want to meet anyone. She was eager to be alone, to have time to think it all out. The thought of what it must have brought to Stephen as well as what it had brought to her made her feel that there was no place now for her to turn. Oh, never to be forgotten day, bringing the burden that Stephen was to carry through the years, and that she was to carry for him and for herself. It was the first thought of herself of which she had been conscious, and it coloured the rest with a darker hue because of the loneliness it brought, of which Dorothea never even guessed before. It oppressed her with a pain that was almost physical, that made her steps uncertain and the burden of the schoolbooks on her arm (think of the days, Dorothea, when you carried them so happily!) almost more than she could stand. Then Dorothea despised herself for thinking of herself at all. Only

of Stephen, she told herself over and over again. He would be more alone now than ever before, for all his work had been taken from him. She could not bear to think of his gathering courage again to start afresh somewhere else, away from all those who depended on him so now, and that very afternoon she had asked him to go away because she wanted to be alone, just as if she had had no thought of him or of what it must mean to him. Dorothea could not cry now. She was far, far past that relief. She could think only of Stephen going home through the night to his little house in which there was no one except Ruy Calidan even to speak to him. There with only his thoughts to keep him company, he would bear the burden that was his. And she who was so proud of him, who alone understood, who knew his hopes, his plans, to whom he had shown himself in all his strength and goodness, had shut her eyes to all this and had sent him away without one word of comfort.

Dorothea paused and looked down the hill. There was no light in the little house beside the church. Would it be long before Stephen was home again? Yet what did it matter? He must have seen how she thought only of herself, how she had cried because he would not tell her what she had no right to know. He was so wise, Dorothea told herself, he must know best whether she should be told or not. Oh, to go to him, to ask him to forgive, to forget that it had ever happened! The sorrow because she never could ask!

Dorothea entered the white house and reached her room unobserved. At last she was quite alone. There was no need now for the brave smile she had worn

through all the long day and until at last, at the coming of night she had reached Red Lane. There was no need now to give back to Mary Blake the friendliness of Mary's greeting. The schoolbooks slipped from her lap to the floor, as Dorothea seated herself in the great chair that had come long ago across the sea from Holland. Dorothea rested her head against its tall back and sought the shelter of its great broad arms. So alone, with only her Father in Heaven to see, Dorothea tried to begin at the very beginning, to stifle her heart so that she could think again, so that she could think clearly and try to understand what it all meant. Yet it was a long, long time before she could succeed, before the heart that was the real Dorothea would let her do anything but think of Stephen and love him and want to comfort him and seek after him with all the yearning that love can make one heart feel for another. Well indeed, was it that Stephen did not know, that no one can know except Him who only can understand.

Everywhere else in the white house was cheerfulness and quiet. In the kitchen a bright light burned and the long hall and the sitting-room had about them the cheerful glow of home. How different it was from the darkness in Dorothea's room, yet the darkness was best, for in it Dorothea's self, that everywhere else in the great house must hide itself, lest others see, was free.

Dorothea had lost all sense of time. She heard her mother's knock on the door as does one who wakens from a dream. Yet this time it had been a sad dream indeed. The thoughts of the night before

were almost meaningless, now that the sorrow had become real. She could not even think of going on, yet she knew she must, and that she must find strength to face it, and her mother's knock at the door told her that the time for beginning had come. Then there rose in Dorothea that which made her the woman she was, for she said to herself, "I must be brave. Stephen would want me to be. I will do just as he does. No one would have guessed to-day what all of this means to him." So the voice that answered the knock was almost cheerful, though it faltered just a little bit.

"I will be down in a moment, Mother," said Dorothea.

Well for the mother heart that she could not guess all that was going on behind Dorothea's door. Dorothea lighted her candle and the faint, flickering light found its way around the room that was so dainty, like Dorothea herself. It touched her image in the glass lovingly. At the sight, Dorothea smiled to herself, for the face did not show her heart's suffering, yet. So the golden hair was smoothed, and the gown, and made fresh again. Then the candle no longer, and for an instant Dorothea stood by her window. There through the night was the light in Stephen Lane's study, burning steadily.

"God comfort you, Stephen," she whispered.

Then she turned away to face her task as Stephen would have had her do, if he could have known.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SHADOWS ON THE SHADE

THE friendship that existed between Stephen Lane and Ralph Curtis was easy to understand. There was a side to Stephen's nature singularly like Ralph's, and from the beginning the latter found Stephen not only in sympathy with him, but able to supply the resoluteness and experience in practical matters that he lacked. Stephen was attracted by Ralph's frank, fresh nature, his disposition to idealise and his inclination to see only the beautiful. Stephen was a dreamer himself, yet with it he possessed a considerable measure of the homely virtues of common sense and a mind that could be practical with the same readiness with which it could theorise. It was this part of Stephen's nature that kept him from misunderstanding and from becoming discouraged when he found in some of the people about him an utter lack of the appreciation of the finer side of life and no desire even to gain a knowledge of it. Sometimes Stephen feared that Ralph would fail to understand the hard knocks that the world was sure to give to a sensitive nature that was meant to sit apart from the noise and hurry as was his, dreaming in some quiet, sunny spot of those things that the world finds precious but has not the time to stop to think of for itself. Of such stuff are the poets made, and the musicians and the

painters—the men who are willing to walk alone, to be hurt, to be shunned, while their brothers have been succeeding. But in the end there comes a day when before all men lies some lasting good that their sacrifice has made possible, a precious gift indeed, for it is the immortal part of themselves giving comfort and strength and encouragement to all that is mortal.

Thus both found relief in the society of each other. Often Ralph said, “Stephen, I can talk to you,” and Stephen, understanding, would reply, “And I to you, Ralph.” With Stephen, Ralph laid aside his shy, reserved manner, nor did he hesitate to show his inmost self. Often he accompanied Stephen on the long journeys that the minister had to make from one end of Staten Island to the other. It was hard to tell which of them enjoyed those trips most.

Stephen saw clearly that it was Ralph’s temperament which made him devote himself to books rather than to the sturdy work more usual in the neighbourhood. Both of them found much that was beautiful on Staten Island, much that satisfied them, for where, indeed, were the blue hills and the green valleys more perfectly blended? Often Ralph brought with him on their walks a book of verse, to call Stephen’s attention to some portion that attracted him, and Stephen tried to point out as far as he was able, what it meant or what it might be made to mean.

There was one walk neither of them forgot. It was a late February afternoon, and mild in spite of the deep snow everywhere. They started early, for Stephen’s errand took him far down toward Prince’s Bay, near the place which is now known as Huguenot.

They found their destination to be a tiny cottage by the roadside, and Ralph walked about the little house while Stephen was within. As they started homeward along the frozen road, Stephen suggested that they pass through Richmond, the County seat.

On they went, through the snow, and soon the road led them between fine stone fences with here and there massive iron gates. Stephen stopped before one of them.

"See, Ralph," he said, "some great man tries to impress upon us the fact that this beautiful land is his." And he pointed through the gates across the land beyond to where the deep salt channel made its way up from the Bay, and all around were the snow-covered hills. It was, indeed, beautiful.

"Do you know the house, Ralph?" he continued. "It is quite a famous one. We will pass it on the left of the road in a few moments."

"I have heard of it," replied Ralph. "Perhaps we can get a good look at it this afternoon."

Soon the great house was close at hand, yet there was something dark and forbidding about its walls of grey stone, with neither a bit of white curtain at the window, nor the honest red of a chimney to make it seem like home. Stephen stopped Ralph again.

"It is here the great man lives," he said. "I am more sorry for him than I can tell you. When a few winters have come and gone, all the glory of his place will be taken from it and all in so short a while. Just a few winters and there will come one when the fences and gates will be toppled over, and the house itself, perhaps, be but a few broken walls to tell of what it is

to-day. How I hope the happiness of those who live there now is based on something more lasting."

Then they went on again along the road where it led between two rows of swamp willows standing like sentinels on each side with their roots buried deep in the cold black water beneath the ice and snow. Yet the part of their walk that each remembered longest was still to come, for when Richmond was reached and they turned to the right along the road that led to the Black Horse Tavern, Stephen stopped and pointed across the little valley. The two young men stood looking steadily at the scene before them without a word.

Winter among those hills brought with it a sense of security and of isolation, too. Yet even the latter was not without its comfort, for it seemed to bid the rest of the world to stay away, that the valley might sleep through the long winter months in peace. The road led across the valley and wound away past the church, with the snow-covered graves beside it, and along the edge of the hills. The hills themselves with their heavy timber and the blue haze of winter about them, stood as silent as the rest of this little world, so that those who slept beneath the snow found nothing but peace. Something of this Stephen and Ralph took away with them in their hearts when they turned again and made their way along the road.

That day Ralph Curtis had some verses of his own making to submit to Stephen. Many times before they had talked of Ralph's hopes and of the ability displayed in the modest little rhymes he sometimes composed. Stephen knew all that Mary Blake was trying

to do to make Ralph the man he was capable of becoming. Stephen wanted to help, for he felt instinctively that Mary's happiness was so close to Dorothea's that helping Ralph would indirectly affect Dorothea herself. The verses that day were certainly lamentable. Stephen saw their faults, yet still found in them much that was commendable. He cheered Ralph by suggesting that they go over the words together in the hope of making them express the thought more clearly. This they did as they trudged along the wintry road, and when the verses were corrected as far as possible, Ralph's gratitude almost overcame him.

"Stephen," he said, "you help me just as Mary does. You are so patient with it, and take so much trouble, and you have so much else to do besides."

Stephen smiled.

"It is just pleasure," he said. "I enjoy it as much as you do."

"Sometimes I get so discouraged," said Ralph. "If it were not for Mary and you to keep my courage up, I don't know what I should do. You see, Stephen," he went on, "sometimes I get so blue because I feel that I am not accomplishing as much as the rest of the young men are, that I am not making any progress in earning money or in being able to take care of myself. After a while, you and Mary will be giving me up as worthless, or at least as so peculiar as not to be gotten on with."

Stephen shook his head.

"Don't worry about that," he replied. "Mary Blake knows you too well to think any such thing, and so do I."

Stephen spoke with emphasis, for he knew all that was in Ralph's mind, and understood his fear that Mary would be disappointed with him.

"Sometimes, Stephen," said Ralph, "there are days and days when I am so anxious about it I can't rest. You see, I am quite a man now, and have been a man in years for a long while. Yet I am not a bit successful in a business way. I have nothing to offer Mary—I mean—oh, well, I might as well tell you, Stephen, though I guess you know already. I have nothing but myself to offer her, and no telling when I will be able to take care of myself, much less of her."

"She only wants you, Ralph," said Stephen quietly.

Ralph turned and stood facing Stephen Lane.

"Will you please say that again?" he said. "I have tried to tell myself a great many times that if Mary wanted me at all, it would be just for myself. I seem to know that it is true when I hear you say it."

Stephen smiled again, but this time a little sadly. He was thinking—but there was Ralph waiting for him to speak.

"She wants only you, Ralph," he said.

Then as the young man's face brightened, he went on:

"You are taking to her, Ralph, what many men cannot take to the woman whom they love—a clean heart and an honest one, and a mind and body that are clean and pure, too. These are the things a woman seldom finds in a man, and yet they are the things that she prizes most. They make her happiness most secure. They mean more than the greatest honour you could win, or the greatest success."

So they went on talking in this friendly, comforting fashion, till they reached home again, just at the end of the day.

That evening, when Stephen was again hurrying home, he met Ralph in the darkness. There was to be a meeting at the little house beside the church, and even now Stephen was late, but Ralph's eager face and still more eager words detained him.

"Oh, Stephen," Ralph began, grasping Stephen's hand, "you were quite right in what you said to-day. Mary—I—that is——"

Stephen shook Ralph's hand warmly.

"I am so glad," he said, "so very glad. There is nothing you could tell me that would make me happier, and I know that Mary is happy, too."

"It is just too wonderful to be true, Stephen," said Ralph, in his happiness. "Mary said she has just been waiting for me to come, waiting always through all these years, while I have been trying to find out whether I was worth something or not. I would never have had the courage to speak to her of it, had it not been for what you told me this afternoon about what a woman found was the true worth in a man."

They had reached Stephen's house now. Evidently the others had not waited outside for him, but had made themselves quite at home. Stephen was glad when he saw the light burning brightly in the little parlour. The white shades, because of the strong lamplight behind them, cast a radiance over the snow about the little house, and the squares of the window-panes were marked clearly, together with the shadows

of those who had gathered within. As they approached the house, Ralph stopped Stephen.

"See, Stephen," he said, pointing to the window, "there is no trouble in guessing whose silhouette that is on your window-shade."

Stephen stopped and looked. There was indeed no difficulty in recognising the sharp profile on the white shade, for the forehead and prominent nose belonged but to one man Stephen knew.

"You are right, Ralph," he replied, "it is Alen Therwith."

As Stephen started to go on, he saw that Ralph was still staring at the window.

"How queer it is, Stephen," he said. "Have you two lamps? There is Alen Therwith's shadow again on the other window."

Stephen looked. There was the same forehead and the prominent nose again, though this time less distinctly. Then as he looked, the other shadow moved, and lo, there on the same shade were the two profiles, so alike that those who watched could not have told which had been on the shade first. It was well that Ralph was watching the shadows on the shade, for the sight deprived Stephen for an instant of the power to speak or move or even think.

"There is only one lamp," Stephen managed to say at last, and together they went into the house. It was only when they were once within that Ralph saw that Stephen Lane's face was as white as the shade itself had been, and that his hand trembled as he laid aside his coat.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LITTLE BOX

LONG afterwards, Stephen told Dorothea of the shadows on the shade, but he did not tell her of all that happened that night. So it is that a brave man hides from the one he loves all that has been hardest for him to bear of things that he has borne for the sake of her happiness. It is only to the few that there is given the strength to be thus truly unselfish and wholly worthy, for the desire to let the other know all that has been borne for her sake is almost irresistible. Even the man who is able to do his duty as he sees it spreading out before him, through lonely years, perhaps, is seldom able to be all he should—to have the strength to keep silent and to conceal what the burden has been. Yet it was just this that Stephen Lane did. It must not be believed that he was different in this than in other things. There was one lesson at least that he had learned thoroughly—that of controlling himself. No matter what occurred, he did not give way to a self-pity that would have made him seek sympathy. None among his congregation saw fully the care and thoughtfulness Stephen Lane exercised in all he did, leaving nothing undone that his unselfishness could suggest he should do. There are many men such as this, but few are strong enough to hide the full measure of their unselfishness, nor are they able to cover it as Stephen did, with a cloak of

cheerfulness woven by his sheer strength of heart and mind.

Late that night the study lamp burned as steadily as of old. Stephen Lane and Ruy Calidan were sitting side by side at the desk, and there between them lay a little box. It was Ruy who opened it and handed Stephen the piece of paper it contained. Stephen unfolded it and, turning so that the lamplight fell more strongly on the yellow paper, read what was so plainly written there. It was the first time that Ruy had let him know even of the existence of the little box and its contents.

Ruy Calidan was proud of the intense interest it roused in Stephen. He sat back in evident enjoyment as he saw Stephen rise and walk up and down the room in that tireless fashion of his. Then Stephen stopped and bending over the table beside the lamp, read all the words on the bit of yellow paper, read them slowly and carefully, as though they were all quite new to him. Then he turned back to the beginning and commenced reading again, but this time aloud:

"The Song of the Pines of the Forest
Is that—"

"Where did you get this, Ruy?" he asked sharply, turning to the boy. Ruy was more flattered than ever, for he saw that Stephen was wonderfully interested.

"It's a long story," Ruy replied. "It has to do with my father. My mother has told me that when I show this box and piece of paper to my father, he'll have to admit that I'm his son."

There were wild thoughts in Stephen's mind that night—the shadows on the shade that were so alike—yet there was nothing in the writing or in the little box that indicated anything. Yet Stephen felt his pulse beat more quickly at the thought that in some way this might concern Dorothea. The possibilities of the situation and what might be within his power to do came before him. With it was the knowledge that it was but justice to this boy to try to help him. Then there came to Stephen Lane a sense of exultation, of joy, as of a man who, with his task lying clearly before him, finds himself ready to undertake it. Then all the exultation was gone. Suppose it were true? Stephen knew Dorothea too well to have the slightest doubt as to what she would do. Alen had told Stephen in so many words that Dorothea loved him, and Stephen knew that nothing would change her, once her heart had found its other self. By the merest chance, it lay within his power to establish, perhaps, a chain of circumstances which he had not yet even realised clearly. Yet in that moment, there was given to Stephen the knowledge of all the possibilities, and what it might mean to Ruy Calidan would be as nothing compared with the pain it would, perhaps, bring to Dorothea. How easily he could twist it one way or the other! The boy beside him would never suspect. Ruy would go on searching and always in vain, for there was but the barest chance of his being successful, just as it had been but by chance that the remarkable resemblance between Ruy and Alen Therwith had been revealed to Stephen. Moreover, Stephen well knew that he could

easily dissuade Ruy from that which thus far had been the one purpose of his life, the search for his father. Then, through all the years, Dorothea and her happiness would be safe, and she would share her life with Alen Therwith, with the man she had chosen, never dreaming of the great shadow that might have enveloped her with its darkness. The sin, if there were one, would be Stephen Lane's, and his only, because, seeing, he had been willing, in order to shield her, to mislead Ruy Calidan and to prevent forever a discovery which Stephen knew should not be hidden, but should be brought forth from its secret hiding-place, if it existed at all, to be condemned in the eyes of man just as God himself would condemn it in the Day to come. Stephen wondered whether another man had ever been thus tempted. His mind went relentlessly through the whole process of reasoning, from the beginning to the end. Nor was there any detail he could spare himself. He was glad of this little time in which he was free to weigh every feature of what he believed to be the situation, lest he should make some dreadful misstep.

Then, too, he needed to think calmly, for it might be that he was about to assume the greatest burden that would ever be his—a burden that should be known for all time as the great wrong he had done. He could not but wonder whether Dorothea's happiness would be secure if it were built on his own falsehood to what he knew to be right, and yet, what sorrow might not come to her if he were not willing to assume all this? Stephen shuddered at the thought. Slowly and carefully he recounted the meagre facts

that were his, beginning with the night on which he and Alen Therwith had talked in that very room. Stephen searched his memory in vain for anything Dorothea had ever said or done, tending to confirm what Alen had told him. Nor was there anything in Alen's history, so far as Stephen knew, tending to substantiate Stephen's wild surmise. Then there came to his mind incidents such as Dorothea's asking him in Red Lane if he were going away. He could find no connection between this thought and Ruy's story, though one seemed part of the other. Yet it was no idle conviction that had come to him in that instant when he and Ralph saw the shadows on the shade. It was an absolute certainty, though based on nothing more tangible than the resemblance of the silhouettes and the tiny fragment of Ruy's past that Stephen had gained from the one fact of Ruy's tireless search for his father. Stephen Lane wondered why God had selected him as the one to whom this knowledge should come. He never thought for an instant that there was no one else to whom it could be trusted. Then, too, Providence allots the difficult tasks only to those who, like Stephen, are worthy.

Above all, Stephen Lane was just. He would not allow suspicion against Alen Therwith to remain in his mind where he had the power to establish its falsity. At least he must make the test. If it failed, if he were mistaken, if the shadows on the shade were but a queer coincidence, no one, not even Ruy, would know, and no harm would be done either to Alen Therwith or to Dorothea, but if—Stephen paused. He did not dare to think of all that might follow the

"if." He tried to comfort himself with the assurance that nothing would follow it, that he could readily prove his inference to have been a mistake. He told himself that it was only in books that such remarkable things occurred. Yet there was another reason, almost a controlling one, requiring him to try the experiment. Justice to Ruy Calidan demanded that Stephen seek the truth, even though he reserved to himself the right to decide whether or not Ruy should know the result. The possibility of his inference being verified was too remote to be considered. At last Stephen turned to Ruy.

"I wish you would let me have the box," he said. "I will give it back to you after a while."

For once Ruy was reluctant.

"I have promised," he said, "I have promised my mother never to let anyone have it until—" Stephen saw the queer gleam in the boy's eyes. All the evil in Ruy's nature had been roused by his own words, and an unspeakable hatred, like some venomous thing, showed itself in his voice and face—"until I find the man who is my father. My mother has told me over and over again that when he sees this box, he can't deny that he *is* my father."

Stephen looked into the boy's eyes, and his kind glance drove the evil from Ruy. When he spoke, he was just a boy again.

"You don't mind if I don't let you have it, Mr. Lane?" he asked.

"Of course I do not mind, Ruy," said Stephen.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE SCHOOLHOUSE

It was a March afternoon. Dorothea was still seated at her desk in the schoolhouse.

"I am sorry that Mary is ill," she said to herself, "yet it is comforting to find that one can make everything go smoothly just by one's self."

The little schoolhouse was very quiet. Long ago the last scholar had gone, and the great pile of work on Dorothea's desk steadily diminished under the rapid movement of her pencil. Each childish error had been found and corrected. Sometimes Dorothea's face was all puckered up as though she were a child herself, at loss over some incomprehensible blunder. Then she would smile again, but somehow, the smile did not last long. Dorothea's face grew wistful, though she talked to herself bravely.

"He has some good reason for it, though there is no denying that he has avoided you for a long while, young woman," she said, addressing herself. "Yet I know it must be right, otherwise Stephen would not do it. But if it makes you happier, there can be no harm in just pretending that you meet him."

Dorothea looked around guiltily, as though someone might have overheard, and the colour came stealing into her cheeks.

"I don't wonder you are ashamed," she said. Then she gave herself up to such happiness as her heart could find in dreaming of meeting Stephen again as of old, before this mystery had put an end to it. Dorothea looked idly out of the window. The shadows were longer now, much longer, yet the sun seemed to pause irresolutely before slipping away until to-morrow. Quiet pervaded everything, and the quiet of the schoolhouse gave to Dorothea the sense of security that just then was what she needed. Day after day she had waited thus for the time to come for her to go home alone along the familiar path. Their meetings in Red Lane, the few there had been of them, had been at just this hour, for Stephen was accustomed to be out-of-doors then. But since the fateful one on which Dorothea had asked Stephen if he were going away, Stephen seemed to have avoided the Lane as he had avoided Dorothea herself. Yet the girl found happiness in the pretense that she would meet Stephen, imagining what each of them would say, and thinking of the plans they would make for Stephen's work, yes, even for his new work in the strange place. How little Dorothea guessed the help she was to Stephen or how much her sympathy, and ability to understand meant to him. Dorothea looked out of the window again. Surely it was time now, for the afternoon was waning fast. She crossed the room and took her hat and coat from the closet. As she turned, the door opened and there stood Alen Therwith smiling at her. Dorothea started back in surprise at the sight of his huge form blocking the doorway.

"I was afraid I would be too late," he said. "I was afraid you would be gone."

Alen Therwith seemed more confident and self-satisfied than ever. Dorothea could see that he was not to be disturbed by any suggestion such as that his coming was inopportune, nor was he to be deterred from whatever purpose brought him there.

"I was just going," said Dorothea hastily. Here was a possible ending to her cherished plan of pretending to find Stephen. But Dorothea did not despair yet.

"I wanted to stop at Mary Blake's house," she said. "Mary is ill to-day."

It was not Alen Therwith's way to bother about what did not concern him, so he paid no attention to her remark.

"I have come to talk with you," he said bluntly. He did not seem to heed Dorothea's preparations for departure, but threw himself into a chair and tilted it back against the wall comfortably. His complacency disconcerted Dorothea. It was all as if no other assumption were possible than that he was quite welcome and that Dorothea had no other pleasure in the world than to stay there with him and listen to what he might say. Dorothea was impatient with herself and with Alen, and ashamed too, at the thought that he should regard her in a manner so confident as to be almost insolent. She began putting on her coat.

"I shall have to be going," she said again.

"Not until we have talked," replied Alen, smiling at her confidently.

Dorothea always liked Alen less when he smiled. It quite exasperated her now.

"Come, sit down, Dorothea," said he more quietly, indicating her chair at the desk. "I have a good deal to say to you."

Dorothea gave up in despair. She laid aside her coat, and, walking across the room, seated herself at her desk.

"What is it you have to tell me?" asked Dorothea.

Alen did not speak. Strangely enough, he was visibly embarrassed, though his hesitancy was due rather to a loss of words with which to begin than from any delicacy in approaching the subject.

"No doubt you can guess," he said, shifting his position uneasily. "I am sure you must know what I've got to say to you."

Dorothea looked at him quickly.

"That's it," he said, the courage coming again, "that's it. I want you to marry me."

Dorothea was more than startled. For an instant Alen seemed to enjoy the consternation his words had wrought. That it might mean anything to the disadvantage of his plans did not occur to him. He had not the slightest doubt as to the outcome. It was only that now that Dorothea was quite within his power, he wanted to prolong the pleasure of the moment as does one who, having victory within his grasp, pauses to contemplate it before the final moment of conquest.

"I—I don't understand," stammered Dorothea.

Her colour was gone, and the eyes that could be so tender were troubled, and she looked hastily about

her as though trying to find some means of escape. Then she turned to him hopelessly. Alen Therwith saw and understood the look, and it added to his pleasure a hundredfold, for it told him how well his plans had been laid, and how useless it was for Dorothea to even seek to escape him. Every brutal instinct in his nature was roused at the sight of Dorothea's alarm, and urged him on but the more eagerly. Alen saw the pain his words made her heart feel, and he saw, too, the defiance with which she answered him in spite of her alarm. It told him more plainly than words what Dorothea was. It was just this that he hungered to possess, this incomparably pure heart of Dorothea's.

"Yes, you do," said Alen bluntly, "and you have known it for a long time. I am beginning to get old—that is, older than I once was," he added, laughing apologetically. "It's time I married. You must have known about it," he went on, referring to his former thought. "Your Father, they all, expect it. You have no idea how long I have been getting ready for it. Everything is ready for you to say when it shall be."

His assurance quite took Dorothea's breath away.

"Everybody—" she began, "I—why, it is all a mistake. I could never think of such a thing."

She turned away from Alen and looked out of the window as once before that afternoon, only now her breath came and went in quick, short gasps that hurt her, yet she was trying to control herself. There was much more truth in Alen Therwith's words than she cared to admit. In fact, she knew that it was only too

true, yet it startled her to have him state it in so many words. She knew well he had not been guilty of exaggeration when he told her that her father and others too, perhaps, expected it. A great wave of indignation swept over her and her hands tightened and the colour burned again in her cheeks and in her eyes, too. She listened to Alen speaking as does one in a dream.

"You've no idea," she heard him say, "all it will mean to you. No one ought to know better than you all I've done for you and your people since I came to Staten Island. Look at your father now, compared with what he was the day I first came."

Alen rose and stepped to the window and raising one of his great arms, pointed with a long sweep across the level land.

"See what I've made of that," he said. "It's made your father rich, and I'm the only man who can keep the land as it is now. It will mean," he went on more slowly, resuming his seat, "that your father will retain his prestige; that as long as I live, the white house on the Iron Hill will be as it is now, and you and your mother will have everything you wish that money can buy. There will be no more work in this schoolhouse for you, no more lessons, nothing but to spend your time as you want to, with plenty of money to enjoy."

He looked sharply at the girl. Dorothea shook her head.

"It is impossible," she said, "utterly impossible."

Alen Therwith prided himself on his own keenness and his ability to understand others. He was

satisfied that Dorothea's words only meant that she was postponing the inevitable surrender. He leaned forward and put his hand on hers. The girl sprang to her feet and the other hand sought the one he touched as though it had been hurt.

"How dare you!" she cried. "Oh——" her lips trembled, and the hot tears came into her eyes. She shrank a little further from him and stood with her back toward him, and the hot colour surged into her face and away again, and then back, dyeing her cheeks and forehead. Yet the sight brought no thought of mercy to Alen. Her quick movement when he touched her only roused him the more, for it told him the resentment she felt toward him. His love of gaining the mastery over others rose to this contest as it had to none before. He controlled himself with an effort, and his voice sounded thick and his words came faster than he meant they should.

"There is no way out, Dorothea," he said. "We have settled everything, so you might as well make the best of it."

Dorothea did not reply, and her silence made Alen's mask of amiability drop from him. His tone was quite different now.

"What a nice daughter you are," he said sneeringly. "So dutiful and obedient and so careful to do everything for the best interests of your Father. Oh, it's easy enough for you to say that you will or you won't, but how are you going to get away from the duty you owe to him?"

Alen's words about her father were the first Dorothea had listened to intently. Now she turned toward

Alen, and all the life seemed to have gone from her voice when she spoke.

"I will not discuss it with you," she said slowly, "except to say that it can never be my duty to my Father to do something that is wrong."

As she looked at him, his heavy frame and the black eyes and the selfish face repelled Dorothea as never before. There came to her the remembrance of another man, beside whom Alen Therwith was not fit to stand. She could not bear the thought of what Alen had dared to say and do. Then as she looked at him, she saw that she could never make him understand.

"I wish to go now," she said.

"Then you refuse?" asked Alen.

"Of course," replied Dorothea.

She slipped by him as she spoke and, taking her hat and coat from the desk, walked quickly down the room and out of the door, leaving him standing staring after her. In spite of the cold, she hurried on bareheaded and with her coat in her arms, along the King's Highway, up the Iron Hill and in at the white house. There would not be even a daydream walk in Red Lane that day.

CHAPTER XXI

A CONSPIRACY WHICH FAILS

THAT night the kitchen of the white house held two men who were in a bad humour. Though it was late and the rest of the household had long since gone to bed, Peter Brevoort was still smoking his pipe, his hat on his head, though at an angle indicating at once stress of feeling, together with ill-will toward everyone. His companion, too, was in a like frame of mind, for he spoke with bitterness, and his expression was only evil.

"A nice tangle it's gotten into now!" said Alen Therwith. "Much you knew about it when you told me that it was all settled, that all I had to do was to speak to her. When I spoke to her this afternoon in the schoolhouse, she hit you once. Said that her duty to you could never require her to do something that was wrong. You see what she thinks of your plans."

Peter Brevoort did not reply. Alen Therwith laughed at him.

"A nice master in your own house you are!" he said sneeringly.

The old man turned at him.

"Don't be a fool," he said. "You were too easy with the girl, and for that matter, I've been too. Duty to her Father, eh? Well, it seems to me she answered you pretty well."

This time Alen did not laugh.

"What's the use of talking about it?" he said with a wave of his hand. "You know the terms. It must be Dorothea or else I quit here and now." And he brought his fist down on the table.

"Oh, you do, do you?" snarled Peter Brevoort. "We'll see about that."

Alen Therwith did not press the point, for he well knew the measure of his hold upon his companion. Then the two conspirators drew closer together. Lust and the greed of gain were forming a close partnership that night. Alen Therwith well knew that Peter Brevoort would let him have his own way with Dorothea, rather than lose the least part of the wealth that was now his, or the prospect of more. Then, too, Dorothea's refusal only made Alen the more desirous.

"You were too easy with her," said Peter Brevoort again. "Women don't like that sort of thing. They've got to be told what to do, not asked." Then he relapsed into silence, and the two sat there saying never a word, though each mind was busy. At last Alen Therwith rose.

"I guess you're right," he said slowly, "I guess I was too easy. I'll get her to marry me all right, so long as you do not care just how I do it," he went on with a low laugh.

For an instant, Peter Brevoort looked at him sharply. Then he said:

"I don't care how you do it."

A few moments later, the two men separated for the night.

When Dorothea looked from her window next

morning, she saw a world quite in keeping with her own mood. On awakening, she was conscious that something unkind had happened, that some sorrow had come to her that had not been there before. For a moment she could not remember what it was. Then came the recollection of the scene in the schoolhouse. The girl dwelt on each detail, endeavouring to look at it disinterestedly, that she might be fair to Alen. She knew that it was in this way only that she could prevent her resentment against Alen Therwith becoming so great as to make it impossible for her to act toward him, and perhaps toward her father, too, as she should. Yet Dorothea's indignation rose within her as she remembered what Alen had said and done, and her hand sought her cheek as though to wipe away the colour that came at the thought of the shame of it.

"To think of Alen's saying or doing what he did!" she said to herself. "I wonder what Father would say if he knew."

It never occurred to Dorothea that her father did know, or that Alen Therwith had told him. It was well that Dorothea was spared this added pain. She felt as though Alen's confidence and assurance were the hardest part for her to bear. Yet something in his expression as he talked with her had been so suggestive of evil and all that was unworthy, that Dorothea felt as though she had escaped some great harm.

"I am glad no one will ever know about it," she went on. "Probably no one knows that Alen came to the schoolhouse. Yet I don't know how I can stand even the sight of him after yesterday."

But deeper than all this, Dorothea's pure heart shrank from the thought of Alen's approaching her with a proposal such as this. There had been nothing worthy in it, nothing to redeem it from the baseness of the nature that made it, for it was but another way of gratifying Alen's selfishness. It seemed a dishonour to have had it offered her. She felt it to be a stain she could not wipe away. She half believed that Stephen Lane would know of it, would be able to see it when she should meet him again. She was sure he would realise at a glance that Alen Therwith wanted her, and that there must be some fault in her that had led Alen to believe he could so much as even ask.

Then Dorothea was ashamed of herself. Stephen would not want her to feel so toward Alen Therwith, even after what had happened. Dorothea knew she must forgive him that she might be true to herself.

"I deserve it all," she said. "I deserve to be hurt because I have been thinking only of myself, and pitying myself because I was lonely, and trying to make myself happy by going where I was not wanted."

The road to the schoolhouse was long that morning, though the rain and wind against her cheek felt cool and comforting. Yet her thoughts brought her face to face with her loneliness as never before. Dorothea looked at the low clouds slipping in from the sea. It would surely storm all through the day. She looked at the trees along Red Lane. To another, they would have appeared wet and cold and forbid-

ding. Dorothea only wondered if the trees were lonely, too.

"I am almost glad," she said, "that Mary will not be at school to-day, either. She would certainly guess that something had happened."

The sight of the schoolroom brought vividly before her mind again every detail of yesterday. Even the chair in which Alen Therwith sat was in the very position he had left it. Yet Dorothea wanted it to stay there.

"It will teach you a lesson, young woman," she said.

As she sat at her desk, there came again the feeling of shame at the recollection of Alen's proposal. Yet her heart was glad that he had spoken only of such things as his success and what the money he could give her would mean to her. It would have been sacrilege for him to try to tell her of anything more precious.

Dorothea never confessed how long the hours of that day were, or how weary she was when, late in the afternoon, she started home, worn out with the struggle with herself. A hundred times she found the desire to run away from it all, to go away and forget, almost irresistible. In vain she sought the ultimate solution of these things. Yet she could only see herself going on through unending days. She could not even guess what was to become of her or of Alen Therwith, or what the end of these things would be.

When the day's work ended, it was a very sorrowful Dorothea who put on her heavy storm-coat and

pulled the hood down over her face. Dorothea wanted to cover herself up so that no one would see her, so that she could see nothing but the wet road before her. As she closed and locked the schoolhouse door, and was slipping the great key into her pocket, something wet and hot dropped on her hand. She would not admit to herself that she was crying. That would never do. She must not think of herself any more. She meant to stop at Mary's house to see how she was. Dorothea hurried along, for it would soon be dark. But before the house was reached, there was a smiling, happy face under the hood, all rosy because of the brisk walk and the comfort that comes from having a strong, quiet person to walk beside one, where before one was quite alone, and to smile down reassuringly. After Stephen Lane said good-night to her, he stood in the path watching Dorothea's figure, till the door of the Blake house closed behind her.

.

That evening found the same two men sitting in the kitchen of the white house. It was still raining steadily outside. The hours passed slowly. All through the evening, a horse harnessed to a wagon had stood in the shed near the house. At last it was ten o'clock. Alen Therwith looked sharply at his companion who was now dozing. Then he crossed the room and opened the door.

"Janet!" he called to the servant of whom the white house now boasted. "Janet!"

The sleeper stirred and wakened. Janet appeared at the door.

"Go up-stairs," said Alen Therwith, "and say word has just come from Mary Blake that she wants Dorothea to spend the night there."

When Janet was gone, Peter Brevoort raised his heavy eyelids.

"I heard no one come in," he said.

Alen Therwith laughed, and the laugh was not a pleasant one to hear.

"No one came," he said easily.

Peter Brevoort was quite awake now.

"What are you doing?" he asked sharply.

Alen Therwith looked down at him.

"Don't be a fool," he said. "I'll attend to my business and you attend to yours." Then he went out into the night.

The door had scarcely closed behind him before Peter Brevoort sprang to his feet and, crossing the room swiftly, peered out through the window, as though to follow Alen's figure in the darkness. Then he turned and stole swiftly across the room to the door opening from the hall, and there he stood listening, motionless. For a long space there was no sound in the kitchen save his own short, quick breathing. He was listening with all his might for the sound of a horse's hoofs in the soft earth outside, for the sound of a light footstep in the hall up-stairs. Peter Brevoort's face seemed to have grown old and drawn and pale even as he stood there with his hand on the knob of the door. At last up-stairs he heard a sound that made his hand tremble, and the doorknob rattled as his fingers fell away from it, and a low cry came from his lips. Then he turned and crossed the room

to his seat by the broad, wooden table. There he was sitting with his pipe in his hand when Dorothea entered.

"Father," she said simply, "Mary is worse and has sent for me. I shall spend the night there. I am so anxious, because they have had no doctor. I thought it best not to disturb Mother, for she would only worry."

Those who knew her well, found that never did Dorothea Brevoort show her true self more than when someone needed her help and sympathy. Perhaps Alen Therwith had counted on this very thing to disarm her of suspicion and to get her to go with him that rainy night.

As Dorothea was speaking, there came the sound of a waggon drawing up at the door. In a moment, Alen Therwith entered.

"All ready," he said.

"Good-night, Father," said Dorothea. "Don't forget to tell Mother in the morning what has become of me."

Then she was gone and the door closed behind her. Peter Brevoort sprang to his feet.

"Dorothea!" he cried. But they were gone.

Again he crossed the room and looked out of the window. The rain was beating steadily against the pane.

The darkness was so intense that even Alen Therwith could scarcely find his way. He had to trust to the instinct of the horse. He felt Dorothea beside him, and for the time at least, he could only guide the horse. Before the last descent was reached, the

road turned abruptly. The horse swerved sharply toward the side of the road in fright, and then stopped. There was a man in the centre of the road with a lantern in his hand, which he held high before him in surprise. Because of the turn in the road, neither he nor the occupants of the waggon had been aware of each other's approach. The man recognised them at a glance.

"Why, Dorothea," he said, "I was just coming to your house. Mary was afraid you would worry about her. She is much better and wanted me to leave word for you so that you would know the first thing in the morning."

"I am glad," said Dorothea, "but I thought she wanted me. Did you not say, Alen, that she had sent for me?"

"I told Janet," said Alen readily, "that if you wanted to find out how Mary was, I would take you down."

"That is strange," replied Dorothea, "for Janet came to me in great distress because she understood you to say that Mary was worse. But never mind, now that we know she is better. Climb in the waggon, Ralph, and we will take you home with us."

So Ralph Curtis climbed into the waggon and in a moment they were at the door of the white house again. Dorothea was surprised to see her father open it for them. She was more surprised a moment later at his warm welcome of Ralph.

Though she wondered at it at the time, there was one remark that her father made to Alen Therwith when he came in from the barn, that she never under-

THE SONG OF THE PINES 283

stood. Peter Brevoort had almost laughed aloud when he saw Alen, and there was a tone of exultation in his voice.

“ You didn’t get very far, did you? ” he said. Nor did he seem to mind because Alen made no reply.

CHAPTER XXII

THE HUT IN THE VALLEY

A LONG time ago, a hut stood at the bottom of the ravine known then as now as the Valley of the Iron Hill. Instead of the little open sunny valley to be found there to-day, a heavy growth of pine and hemlock shaded the little valley as deeply in winter as in summer. From as far back as Revolutionary times, the deserted hut had stood, guarded by the thick growth of trees, while mystery and romance wove their spell about it. And the darkness and the solitude had for their only companions to share the hut with them, the stray patch of sunlight that moved back and forth on the moss-grown roof with the swaying of the branches, and the birds that flew in and out of the open door.

The meeting in the hut was but by accident. Stephen Lane and Ruy Calidan left the Highway to seek shelter from an approaching storm. The March rains had left the road up the side of the Iron Hill ankle deep with mud, so that it was almost impossible to make haste, and the way to Stephen's house was long. Neither thought of seeking shelter at the white house and indeed, to Stephen the little hut would have been the happier refuge. Stephen was surprised to find the very man who had been in his thoughts all day standing in the doorway as they approached.

Alen Therwith, too, had sought this shelter, and he greeted his companions with apparent delight.

But at the sight of Alen, Ruy Calidan drew back.

"There's Alen Therwith," he said sharply. "Let's not go there."

But the other had already greeted them.

"Come on, Ruy," said Stephen in a low tone, "it's too late to turn back now."

Ruy looked at Alen Therwith and a strange expression of mingled distrust and hatred came over his face.

"I will if you make me," he said.

At Stephen's suggestion, they gathered dead branches before the rain began, making a great pile of them on the floor of the hut. The gathering darkness and the storm made a fire welcome. Down in the Valley of the Iron Hill, under the heavy trees, it was almost dark when the rain drove them to their shelter. Though the empty hut was not inviting, it proved safe and dry, once the door was shut, and they could listen with comfort to the wild rush of the wind and the sound of the rain falling on the roof. It was Stephen who kindled the fire on the broad hearth. Because of furniture there was none, the two men and the boy seated themselves tailor-fashion on the floor, while the flames jumped merrily and the blue smoke curled up the chimney in the strong draft. Now and then some raindrops fell down the wide chimney into the fire with a hiss.

For a while they talked. Then each listened to the violence of the storm. It seemed to increase with each passing moment, and they could hear the sway-

ing, breaking branches, while the hut itself shook in its efforts to withstand the fury of the storm. The flames leaped higher and higher, and the roar and crackle of the fire mingled with that of the storm.

At last Stephen Lane rose and walked over to the window and looked out into the blackness of the night. Now that the opportunity for his test had come, Stephen hesitated. Here was the chance to introduce it all as a mere incident, to watch its effect unobserved, to have it pass by unnoticed and be forgotten, if his wild surmise had no foundation in fact. Yet still Stephen hesitated. Perhaps it was because of the storm, that had drawn these three together and isolated them thus for a little while. The howling and screeching of the wind and the driving rain against the window, brought to Stephen a sensation that defied his reason. Something very like a presentiment of evil came to Stephen as he stood and watched his companions, for he saw again the wonderful resemblance between the two—the high forehead, the prominent nose, the profile that was alike in each. For the moment, all sense of reality left him and he was overcome with a feeling of awe, of impending calamity that he was powerless to prevent. Fascinated, his eyes watched the two motionless figures with the firelight falling full upon them. In the fire the black outlines of the broken branches seemed to writhe and twist in queer, misshapen forms against the yellow of the flame, in keeping with the tempest without and the inexplicable sense of coming evil that Stephen found within.

As he watched, Ruy rose to put more wood on the



"You dropped this, Ruy," Alen began to say—

fire. As he did so, a little box fell from his pocket to the floor, between Alen Therwith and the fire. Stephen stood motionless. The first step had been taken, and he had been powerless to prevent it.

Alen Therwith leaned forward and picked up the box. The dry branches Ruy threw on the fire leaped into flame till the room was as bright as day.

"You dropped this, Ruy," Alen began to say. And then there happened that which Stephen never forgot.

When Alen spoke, Ruy turned with his back toward the fire while the light fell full on the older man seated on the floor.

"It fell——" Alen went on, turning the box carelessly in his hand. Then he stopped and for a moment the three were motionless. Then Alen Therwith removed the cover from the box and took out the piece of paper it contained. His face showed plainly that which even Ruy saw at a glance. Stephen Lane in the background saw that Alen recognised the box and knew its contents. It was past denying now. Strangely enough, Stephen's thoughts were only of his own reasoning on that night he had seen the shadows on the shade. They had reached the "if" now and were already beyond it. Yet even he had failed to foresee.

Suddenly, with an inarticulate cry, Ruy Calidan, not the boy over whom Stephen had worked so long and patiently, but a Ruy possessed of all the evil that had made him feared, endowed too, for the moment, with a strength ten times even that of which he had boasted, had thrown himself with irresistible fury

on Alen Therwith. The attack was so sudden, so unexpected, that Alen in his prostrate position was but a child in the boy's hands, strong man though he was. Stephen saw that Ruy's fingers were clasped tight about Alen's throat. He flung himself upon Ruy, seeking to break his grasp, and Alen rising, at last wrenched himself free. Ruy threw Stephen aside and darted again at Alen Therwith, and Alen, turning, ran out through the door of the hut, out into the wild storm and the blackness of the night. Close after him, running low to the ground like some animal, ran Ruy Calidan. Stephen followed as best he could through the driving rain, stumbling over broken branches and falling once before he gained the King's Highway. The two forms went swiftly on before him, down to the low land, and Stephen ran on, calling as he went. There in front of them was one of the ditches that Alen Therwith himself had had dug. Stephen saw the two figures, with the queer one closer and always closer in pursuit, plunge into the black water of the ditch, and a moment later, clamber frantically out at the other side, and because there was nothing else to do, Stephen followed through the black, shallow water and up the soft earth on the other side, while the rain beat down upon him. Then on and on he followed as best he could, across the low land that the heavy rain had for the time turned back again into the marsh it was before Alen Therwith came. Now the two figures were heading toward the sea. Before him Stephen saw the black outlines of the cedar trees on Poppy Joe's Island. Queerly enough, at the sight there flashed into Stephen's mind

the thought of the long line of trees that in summer-time shaded Red Lane. Though he did not see them, those very trees were tossing their naked branches like long arms with great, bony fingers, reaching up toward the sky. Now the beach was at hand. The two figures ran close by the elms at the foot of Red Lane, and now the long arms of the pursuer almost touched Alen. Down the beach they ran, and were lost to Stephen's view, but in an instant, he too, reached the beach. There was nothing there but the great stretch of sand and the queer light that the breakers make when there is a storm at night.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TWO BROTHERS

It was not because of any thoughtfulness on Peter Brevoort's part that he chose the very night that the storm detained Alen Therwith in the hut in the Valley of the Iron Hill for his discussion of all that touched Dorothea so closely. There was nothing Peter Brevoort would not speak of, no matter how inopportune the time nor how great suffering to others his words caused. It was well for Dorothea's sake that Alen Therwith was not there. What that night brought to Dorothea, even though she was spared the pain and shame of Alen's presence, none will ever fully know. So it always is with sorrow and with happiness, too. All the sunny times, all the little, joyful things that make the heart's delight, and the converse of them that we call sadness, are things of which others see but a part. In this way are our true selves separated by a barrier that can be impassable, if it will. And perhaps it is because the barrier can be impassable that the heart can hold all the worthy, pure things where no harm can come to them, where none may even see. And thus in keeping itself true, does the heart bring its own happiness. For this reason, there were to be so many years in Dorothea Brevoort's life that would be happy, for few hearts are more worthy than was hers, nor do many keep themselves less soiled by selfishness.

Peter Brevoort and his brother sat smoking after the evening meal. Even in this each displayed his temperament. Peter Brevoort smoked with little, short, aggressive puffs, while his brother sat back comfortably and now and then blew long whiffs of smoke into the air, as does one who is content.

Dorothea and her mother had nearly completed their evening work when Peter Brevoort laid his pipe on the bare table and turned around sharply in his chair.

"Here and now," he said abruptly and he looked at Dorothea with a glance that caused mother and daughter to draw closer together, with that instinctive movement of protection with which one woman shields another. They well knew what Peter Brevoort meant. His glance and attitude and his tone alike told of the years of harshness Peter Brevoort had felt toward Dorothea. Was this night to bring the climax? Was there to be no greater unkindness to Dorothea than this?

For once Mrs. Brevoort asserted herself.

"Not now, Peter," she said. "You and I will talk this over together. There is no need of it now."

Her mild words only made Peter Brevoort more determined.

"You women are all alike," he said testily. "Your heads are full of silly notions when it comes to one of you getting married. You ought to know by the way I married you that there's nothing in it but plain common sense. You thought so yourself when you married me. You knew you were getting a good husband and a good home, and because you had some

sense in your head then, you knew that was enough. Now I don't propose to have you back up this foolish girl in trying to disobey me, by letting her believe that she's something very fine and good, too good to do what a plain, honest man like her father says she should."

Jacob Brevoort changed his position until he was facing his brother. Through the years he had become accustomed to these outbursts, but always before they had been on some trivial topic. Now as always he held his peace.

"It's my own daughter——" Peter Brevoort went on. Again Mrs. Brevoort interrupted.

"But Dorothea," she said, "this concerns her most. She should be the one."

Dorothea turned toward her father. She inherited some of his own spirit, but oh, how much more worthily did she use it.

"You know," she said quietly, "that I have always obeyed you in everything. This is one thing that concerns my happiness alone and I will not have it discussed even before Uncle Jacob."

But her father was already intent on his next words, though they were addressed rather to himself than to anyone else.

"It was always so," they heard him say, "wilful, strong-headed, disobedient girl, who thinks nothing about those who have reared her. Alen's a fine boy, too, as fine as any girl should want." Then to Dorothea—"I know what's gotten hold of you. It's the minister with that soft voice of his and his smooth ways. I have seen from the first how you let him

play with you as he does with all the rest of the women in the church."

When he spoke of Stephen, Dorothea faced her father with eyes that blazed defiance.

"Stop!" she cried, "You shall not be so unjust to him. I will not have it."

Thus it was that as always Dorothea's first thought was unselfish. Then the defiance was gone, and it was but Dorothea, the girl again, who turned to her mother and hid the tears that would come.

If there was one thing that irritated Peter Brevoort more than another, it was a woman's tears. He rose to his feet angrily.

"There you go again," he said, "you are nothing but a child. I have told you plainly what you are to do. I have pointed out to you as clearly as I can how everything I have must suffer if Alen Therwith goes away. If he doesn't have what he wants, there's nothing to prevent his taking the next land and doing with it just as he has done with mine. I can't get on without him because I'm too old to do half that he's able to. You and your mother would have me lose all of this, throw it all away, because of your foolish notions. I won't have it, I say. When Alen comes home to-night, I shall tell him it's all settled."

He did not observe that Jacob Brevoort had risen and, walking slowly over to the fireplace, knocked the ashes on the broad hearth and then laid his pipe down on the shelf. Then he crossed over to where Dorothea stood by her mother.

"There, there," he said gently, "go to bed like a

good girl. Your mother will stay with you to-night until you're asleep. Let me talk to the Father for a while."

Dorothea's mother gave Jacob Brevoort one of the fleeting glances of which there had been many through the years, but which neither of the men had ever noticed. She led Dorothea gently across the room and out of the door, and Jacob Brevoort followed and closed the door behind them and stood listening to their footsteps as they went down the hall beyond.

"I shall not forget your secret, little girl," he whispered, as though to Dorothea. "I haven't forgotten about you and Stephen, nor the promise I gave you the night you told me."

Then he turned toward his brother, and the lines of his face were hard and stern. For a while, neither spoke and neither moved. The kitchen was as quiet as though deserted. Outside they heard the rain beat steadily against the window, though the wind had died somewhat now. The whole scene was quiet and safe—the snug, warm kitchen, those two hale old men, the dying storm without. Then Jacob Brevoort walked over to where his brother sat.

"Peter," he said slowly, "there is something I have kept from you and from everyone through all the years I have lived here. To-night—now—I have made up my mind that you shall know. For once, at least, your will that has been the curse of this household shall be crossed. For once, everything is not to be according to your wish. A long time ago, before—before you were married—I believed in you

and trusted you as a brother should. I stood aside and let you marry the woman I loved, because I believed that you would be kind to her and would care for her better than I could, for you know I have never been successful. I thought I knew my brother so well. I thought I could be quite happy in standing aside and watching you and her go through the years together, seeing her surrounded with the happiness and the comforts you could give her. When it was all too late, I saw I had made an irretrievable mistake, for I knew then that she was but another sacrifice on the altar of your selfishness—that you were using her just as you did all the things around you, for your own pleasure. She had been robbed of everything that a good man would have given her—that I would have given her, the very things you have kept her from having have been those that would have made your success and wealth as nothing in comparison with the happiness both of you would have found. Do you think it has been nothing to me to have to sit quietly under your roof through the years and see all this? Do you think that I, too, have not felt what she has had to bear? And now, to-night, it is her daughter, the daughter that might have been my own, that you demand shall be sacrificed too. You are letting nothing else count except what you believe to be your own interest. You are afraid that you will lose some of the money Alen Therwith has brought you, if you do not buy his allegiance, though the price be Dorothea herself.

“For twenty years I have sat quietly by and let these other things be. Each day that has come and

gone has made me pay a terrible price, though in the beginning I did it for her sake. It was only because I trusted my brother, whom I should not have trusted. I thank God she has never known. But now that you would sacrifice Dorothea too, I tell you that you shall not! I tell you that so long as I am here to oppose you, another life shall not be condemned to unhappiness for you!"

Through it all Peter Brevoort had not spoken, but stood with his face turned away from his brother. In his eyes was the expression of a man who, because he is a coward, is brought at last face to face with the righteous indignation of a just man. Jacob's quiet words (for he had spoken without anger) stripped Peter Brevoort of his arrogant manner. For once, there was nothing left for him to say. For once, he had met a force stronger than his own, and one that confronted him so unexpectedly that the mere revelation of it destroyed his self-possession. Yet his pride made him seek to seem indifferent. He walked slowly across the room toward the door. Even then he did not comprehend fully his brother's words about Dorothea's mother.

"As you will," he said. "My wishes are never considered. You may tell Dorothea that I wash my hands of the whole affair, no matter what it may cost me. No one shall say that I put my own wishes before those of my family. But Alen Therwith will not be thwarted by you or anyone. And he will get Dorothea if he wants her, whether he has your consent or not."

THE SONG OF THE PINES 297

Then he walked out of the kitchen, leaving Jacob Brevoort wondering whether his brother had comprehended the significance of his words, or whether this was but another instance of Peter Brevoort's trying to deceive him.

CHAPTER XXIV

DOROTHEA'S BURDEN

WHEN Mrs. Brevoort and Dorothea left the great Dutch kitchen that night, they went at once to Dorothea's room, where Mrs. Brevoort helped her in her preparations for bed. But before they said good-night, mother and daughter talked for long, as women do when the love they have for each other draws them close together. That night, there was added to a mother's love the knowledge of the sorrow that both had borne in silence since Dorothea came into the world. Mrs. Brevoort did not doubt that an injury as irreparable as that which she herself had suffered from her husband's selfishness, had come to Dorothea. The thought brought to her lips the tender little loving words with which she used to comfort Dorothea when she was a child. After a while, Dorothea turned her tear-stained face toward her mother. Then, seeing that there were tears in her mother's eyes as well, she raised her face till her soft, warm cheek was against that of the older woman. So they sat with their arms clasped tight about each other. Dorothea felt too crushed and hurt to speak. Because her mother was wise, she held the girl in silence, until the time should come when Dorothea could find relief in words. Mrs. Brevoort found it hard indeed, to do this. She wanted to tell Dorothea how unjust

it all was. Now that the full force of Peter Brevoort's selfishness had come at last to Dorothea, Mrs. Brevoort could not bear it, as she had her own suffering, in silence. Yet she knew that any words of hers now could only add to Dorothea's distress. So she held the girl but the closer to her, that she might at least feel the comfort the mother heart wanted to give. At last Dorothea spoke.

"It was all so dreadful! What have I done to make anyone accuse him of such a thing? Just think of the harm it might do him! How could Father have even thought of such a thing! It is all so absolutely unjust and untrue. There could be nothing more unfair to him." Then, after a little pause, "How can I ever let him even see me again? He would despise me just because such a thing had been said."

Mrs. Brevoort was silent. She was wise enough to let Dorothea tell her heart in her own way.

"Don't think I'm ungrateful, Mother, or that I don't want to obey. I know everything Alen has done for us, and I suppose he's all that Father thinks he is; only, with a girl, none of these things count, when she feels as I do. You know I can't argue with Father. He would not understand if I tried. Oh, I suppose I just must do as he wants!"

The tears came again, but something in the tightening of the mother's arms about her gave Dorothea more comfort than any words could.

"You understand how I feel, Mother. In time I might be able to make Alen Therwith my friend. I have tried to, simply because of all he has done for us. But anything more than that I could not do. It

would kill me to have to try. Surely Father would not make me do it. No matter how kind Alen was, I would just shrink from him. To have him touch me—why, even the thought of it is more than I can bear. I would run away, I would—I don't know what I would do. My whole self, Mother, rises against it and tells me that it is all wrong, that no good could possibly ever come of it. You know the foolish things a girl dreams of. Yet they are all part of herself, and her heart is part of herself, too, and is not to be given because someone else says it shall be. Perhaps there are some who could stifle their true feelings and shut their eyes to what their souls are crying for. Such a girl might be able to give herself as Father wants me to. And if I did such a thing, it would be losing my honour, losing everything I have. I could never go on." The girl's tone was quieter now. "I am not thinking of the suffering alone. You know that I have always done everything I could to help, and I always shall. It is only that I am absolutely sure no good can come from anything so wrong. Don't you see how I feel about it? Suppose, Mother, that you were a certain man's wife when all of yourself was crying out through every minute of your life for someone else. Do you think you could bear it? I don't mean the longing and loneliness, though they are hard enough. But to ask a girl to give herself to a man where she knows she belongs to another, is too cruel and absolutely wrong. God could not want such a thing to be. If, after it was all too late, after I had given myself to Alen Therwith, I discovered these things,

I should just have to go on. The fault would have been mine for not having come to know myself before it was too late. But I know I can never find in Alen what my heart has the right to find in the man who is my husband. Because I realise all this now, there is not the slightest possibility of my being able to be so untrue to all I have learned to cherish, as Father would have me do when he asks this of me. It cannot be meant that I am to lose myself completely, to die even though I am here with you all the time. It would be far worse than dying—that would be such an easy, happy escape. Yet there must be some way to avoid it all. You will help me find it?”

Mrs. Brevoort smoothed Dorothea's hair from her forehead and kissed her softly.

“There, there,” she said soothingly. “Let's not trouble ourselves about it so to-night. Many things can happen to prevent it all. We must just have faith that everything will be all right. I can't bear to see you suffer so. We must try to forget about it and I just know it will be all right after a while.”

“But that's not the worst, Mother,” said Dorothea, brokenly. “Father did hurt me to-night, but what he said about Stephen was the worst of all. And for my own Father to be the one to say it! I am so ashamed I can never let Stephen see me again. Just suppose he should find out! What right had Father to say such a thing? Why should he take away from me the little happiness I was beginning to have? Oh, I don't mean that! I mean, why should Father want to reflect so unjustly on Stephen? It is only of Stephen I am thinking. What Father said was so

untrue, so unkind and unfair to him. How glad I would be to give up every thought of Stephen, if by doing so I could keep Father or anyone else from even imagining such a dreadful thing as this. No one who was at all fair to Stephen could ever have said it. There seems to be no way I can defend Stephen where it is my own Father who makes so false an assertion. I could almost do as Father wishes if in that way I could keep him from ever repeating what he said. I would give my own happiness gladly to shield Stephen."

"What do you mean, Dorothea?" said her mother.

The girl hid her face.

"Can't you see?" she said.

"Oh, my Dorothea!" said her mother. "The way *is* hard for you."

Then because the whole story had been told, and because her own experience had taught Mrs. Brevoort that no mercy could be hoped for from her husband, the two women sat in silence with their arms still about each other. At last, after a long, long time, in which the heart of each had been praying for someone other than herself, Dorothea's form relaxed and her head dropped lower and lower, until at last she was asleep. Mrs. Brevoort laid Dorothea down gently, and covered her as though she were still a little child. Then she stood for a moment while there came to her some of those thoughts that lift womanhood and motherhood far, far above all the more unworthy of human things. Oh, to be able to take all this burden herself! Oh, to make Dorothea again the happy self she had been earlier that very day!

THE SONG OF THE PINES 303

Mrs. Brevoort knew that there was little that could be harder to bear than this that had come to Dorothea. Nor was it her gentleness alone that made the suffering so keen. Nevertheless, when Mrs. Brevoort left Dorothea sleeping there safely in her own room, she took away with her part of the girl's burden.

CHAPTER XXV

THE SIN OF STEPHEN LANE

JACOB BREVOORT watched his brother till the door closed behind him. Then he seated himself and, because he was quite alone, bowed his head over the bare table till his forehead rested on his arm. Again and again he murmured softly to himself a name that none had ever heard, a dear, tender little name that once upon a time (but only to himself) a young man had called Dorothea's mother. So she had always been to unsuccessful, plodding, kindly Jacob Brevoort. So she would be to the end. Would that there were more such men as he in the world. He did not know that Mrs. Brevoort had succeeded in getting Dorothea to sleep, and he was anxious about both of them, fearing the burden of sorrow that had come to them that evening. Suddenly he raised his head. There was a knock at the kitchen door, followed by another and louder one. Then before he could rise, the door opened and there stood Stephen Lane. Yet for a moment Jacob Brevoort did not recognise him. Wet from head to foot, pale-faced and hatless, bedraggled with mud and mire, the horror of the night's adventure still in his eyes, he was very different from the Stephen Lane whom Jacob Brevoort knew and loved. Then, too, Stephen was shaking all over, but not from fear. He was quite self-possessed enough

to glance about the room before he spoke. Jacob Brevoort noticed the expression of relief on his face when he found they were alone. Then Stephen shut the door and sat down in the nearest chair. The telling of what had happened was of almost no moment to Stephen Lane. Through it all there had been the one distinct thought in his mind. From the very moment he darted out into the storm after those two, he had been conscious only of the danger that had come to Alen Therwith, the man Dorothea Brevoort loved. He, Stephen Lane, had made that danger possible and brought to Dorothea a sorrow that could never be lifted from her, and had taken out of her life everything that made it happy. It had all come because of his own selfishness, because he had wanted to test Alen Therwith. Yet Alen had trusted him so. Moreover, it had been Stephen himself who found Ruy Calidan and who went out of his way to bring that strange creature to Staten Island. None knew better than he of Ruy's violence, of the uncontrollability of every impulse in Ruy's nature. Moreover, Stephen remembered how he had prided himself on his ability to keep Ruy away from Dorothea lest the boy harm her. Yet in the end, he had let Ruy rob her in an instant of all that her heart had to cling to for happiness. Thus Stephen branded himself with his sin, recognising in himself one who has done the most evil of things—taken a woman's happiness, leaving her desolate and broken-hearted and forsaken for all the days of her life. Stephen told himself that he had done just this to Dorothea Brevoort. Nor could he reconcile his willingness to put Alen Ther-

with to the test in view of the possibilities as he had foreseen them, with his own affection for Dorothea. Even in the midst of the awful anxiety, these doubts but burned themselves the more indelibly upon his mind. The long walk back from the beach had given him time to think, yet only of this. He who had been so proud of his own thoughtfulness, who had let himself dream of the tender care with which he would shield her, had been the very one to bring to her the greatest sorrow. How well he remembered the dreams, the dreams that had been gone over again and again until they became almost a reality! Yet they had not enabled him to keep from bringing this burden of sorrow to Dorothea. This was the way in which he had shielded her. He was glad that he could not escape the penalty his sin brought upon him, yet the paying of it would not make the burden lighter for Dorothea. Alen Therwith was gone. Nothing could alter that fact. Thus the harm to Dorothea was irreparable. Stephen lost sight of the fact that the terrible event which had occurred was a complete verification of all he had suspected since the night he and Ralph saw the shadows on the shade. In his contempt for himself and for the part he had played, everything else was forgotten. That he himself was blameless never occurred to Stephen. His thought was only of Dorothea and that he had brought this sorrow to her. Stephen believed this to be his sin and one for which he could never atone.

Long afterward, Stephen had an indistinct recollection of telling Jacob Brevoort what had happened. At the time he was only aware of Jacob's having

called his brother and of men gathering in the kitchen. There was the sound of harsh, gruff voices, and the room itself seemed filled with lighted lanterns that swayed and grew misty and uncertain as he looked. Then all became blank and was lost to Stephen.

Dorothea was safely asleep when Stephen Lane's abrupt appearance at the kitchen door roused her. Uncle Jacob from his lonely thoughts to a long night of work of a kind that makes men old. Dorothea still slept when the men with their swinging lanterns had gone on their search, leaving Stephen Lane behind them.

There was plenty of work for the women of the household to do that night, too. Assisted by Janet's strong arms, Mrs. Brevoort had almost literally carried Stephen into the hall and from there up the stairs, though Stephen was sufficiently aware of what was going on about him to protest the while. Still leaning heavily on both women, Stephen found himself at last in the room that had been Alen Therwith's. Then while Janet went to the kitchen to prepare a hot drink for the minister, Mrs. Brevoort undressed Stephen as though he were her own son and put him to bed.

Stephen Lane was no longer conscious of what was going on about him. His thoughts wandered back again through the events of the night. Sometimes he spoke as though to himself, and again strove to be definite and distinct, that those about him might understand. As she remembered the night afterward, Mrs. Brevoort was always thankful that Dorothea was spared this part of it at least. She was glad, too,

that Stephen was there in the white house, if he were to be ill, for it would be easier for Dorothea.

When the hot drink had been taken, Stephen lay breathing the short, quick breaths of a man who is ill. He turned uneasily from side to side; and though his eyes were closed, it was in delirium rather than sleep.

Having made the minister as comfortable as possible, Mrs. Brevoort found time to think of someone else, and, leaving Janet to sit at the sick man's bedside, she closed the door behind her and walked quietly along the hall. It was before Dorothea's door that she paused.

The white house was absolutely quiet. So a home always is in the small hours of the night. Standing there in the hall, before Dorothea's door, it seemed to Mrs. Brevoort that what she had to tell the girl, following their talk as closely as it did, was too unreal to be true. When she saw Dorothea lying so peacefully asleep in spite of all that had harassed her, Mrs. Brevoort uttered a whispered prayer of thankfulness because Dorothea's wakening would find the burden gone forever.

Dorothea was roused by her mother's touch on her forehead. The girl's lips moved and a little troubled sigh came with returning consciousness. Then she looked at her mother with wide-open, startled eyes.

"Dorothea," began Mrs. Brevoort, "there has been an accident. They—he——"

Dorothea seized her mother's arm.

"Stephen!" she cried. "Is it Stephen?"

Mrs. Brevoort had not meant Stephen Lane.

"Stephen is quite safe," she said, "he is here now, in bed and asleep."

"Here!" gasped Dorothea. "Oh, what has happened?"

Yet the mere knowledge that Stephen Lane was safe drove all the terror from the girl's eyes. Her heart would let her listen quietly now, no matter what the news might be. Mrs. Brevoort told her in a few words what had occurred. When she finished, Dorothea covered her face with her hands. But she did not speak.

"I always knew the boy would come to some such end," said Mrs. Brevoort. "The minister tried to save them, but he was too late."

Dorothea sat up in bed in alarm.

"Stephen is hurt!" she exclaimed. "You are hiding something from me!"

But her mother shook her head.

"No, Dorothea, there is much I don't know of what has happened, but I do know that Stephen Lane isn't hurt. What he has gone through has been too much for him—that is all. When he came to the house to tell your Uncle Jacob, he was in a terrible condition, all wet and covered with dirt. But he will be quite himself again to-morrow. He is asleep now and Janet is watching him. There is nothing the matter with him except that the excitement has been too great. I am sure he is not going to be sick. He will be all right as soon as the shock is passed, for you know how well and strong he always is."

Dorothea looked at her mother doubtfully. Then she rose and began to dress. Mrs. Brevoort rejoiced

as she saw Dorothea's ability to meet the emergency. She knew there would be nothing in the days to come that Dorothea would not bear bravely.

"That is right," said Mrs. Brevoort. "Come to the kitchen, for I must get things prepared before they come home."

Dorothea stood motionless as she realised the full meaning of her mother's words, but she said nothing.

The storm was gone. All the land lay quiet, but the sea still broke heavily upon the beach, that the tempest might not be too soon forgotten. Up and down the sands, the nodding lanterns of those who searched still moved to and fro. Over the sea there came at last the faint grey of the coming day. At first it was so pale as to cause no reflection in the waves. Then it spread until it covered sea and sky, but because the clouds had not gone, there were but sombre colours everywhere. It was a fit setting for the work that was to be done that early morning.

Why should the details of all that happened there by the sea in the dim light of the coming day be recorded? It is enough to know that at last the searchers were rewarded, for they found the two forms tossing about in the sea, clasped tight, even in death, in each other's arms. When the men with their dripping burdens turned their steps homeward it was at a point down the beach far, far away from Red Lane. If they had found what they sought on the beach by the three great elms, their homeward journey might have been along Red Lane itself. Let us be glad that Red Lane saw nothing of this tragic procession. Thus in the years to come, those who

loved Red Lane could look back upon it without this recollection to mar the happiness the memory gave them—Red Lane with its sunshine and the flowers and the birds. After a time, there will be a day when Red Lane with its wonderful name, with its memories, will be no more. It is just thus that in every life comes a time when the word “gone” covers everything. Yet even the word itself may bring only happiness, where it teaches that which we would not forget even if we could. In every heart there is hidden away the memory of a Red Lane that makes real all that Red Lane itself was to Dorothea and to Stephen. After all, the changes that come to the world alter the real selves but little. The song of the pines of the forest is the same yesterday, to-day and to-morrow. And the dear, sacred, precious things are the same and always will be, as long as God lets people dwell in the land. Let us be glad, then, that in the grey of that long-gone morning, the men with their swinging lanterns and their silent, dripping burdens made their way slowly back to the white house on the Iron Hill, leaving Red Lane with no dreadful memory to haunt it.

CHAPTER XXVI

"STEPHEN."

MRS. BREVOORT's statement to Dorothea that Stephen Lane would be well in the morning, proved untrue. For neither that morning, nor the next, nor for many that followed, was Stephen free from his delirium.

Of those days and nights, Stephen Lane remembered little. His mind was wandering through unhappy worlds where all the unreal, unreasonable, horrible things were to be found on every hand. Through it all was the knowledge of some harm that threatened Dorothea, which he was powerless to prevent. He was as one tied hand and foot while some terrible thing that hovered in the blackness about him was preparing to encompass her. His brain burned with a heat that almost consumed it. Stephen had a horrible idea that he could no longer see, that the blackness everywhere was but the sightlessness of his own eyes. Then there came blank spaces of time which gave him the rest he sought. But always his mind would go on again through the same turmoil and horror. Sometimes he awakened and saw an unfamiliar room about him and faces that had the queer trick of looking for the moment like the faces of those he knew. But they only changed and mingled with his dreams when he looked again. At last

Stephen felt his strength going from him. The dream was less vivid and troubled now, but he felt this was because his mind and body were losing their power. He knew he was sinking down, down, down, with neither the strength nor the desire to struggle against it.

As the fancies grew dim, they changed. All was quieter now. The horrible things were far away and came but now and then to disturb him. His head and eyes still burned, but Stephen felt almost indifferent to the pain. He knew now what it was. This was the end. He was quite ready for it, he told himself. He could not remember just what had happened, but he knew nothing else could matter much. He kept repeating that it could not matter, that nothing mattered. Then he felt something touch his forehead. Then it touched the eyes that burned, and brushed the hair back from his temples. Again it smoothed his forehead and again and again. Stephen's wandering gave place to an exquisite feeling of content and rest. And it was all because of the touch of something soft and cool and soothing. He felt he could almost go to sleep and sleep as he had done when he was a boy, long, long before all these things came to disturb him. Then he was asleep, and this time peacefully. Everything was blotted out and forgotten and gone, everything except Dorothea.

The same nights and days wrought a great change in Dorothea Brevoort and one which those about her felt, even though they were not wise enough to understand the reason for it. It was as though the shyness of the girl gave place to a gentle dignity that until

then was all unsuspected. It was as though Dorothea had grown in a day from the girl to the woman—serene, self-reliant, infinitely tender. Gently, yet none the less firmly, Dorothea controlled the white house and its people. Some among them marvelled at the girl's womanliness, yet only Mrs. Brevoort saw and understood the change. The wonder of it was that Dorothea did not falter or find the burden too great. It was hard, indeed, to watch thus through the days of Stephen's illness and through the long hours of anxious waiting. But the weariness that came to Dorothea was of her body rather than heart or mind, for Dorothea's courage gave no indication of faltering.

It was her Uncle Jacob who found her one night, sitting at Stephen's bedside with her head fallen till it rested on the back of her chair, sleep having come at last because nature would be no longer denied. Jacob Brevoort gathered her up in his arms with a tenderness of which even she never guessed, and carried her to her own room where she slept till it was day again. It was as well that she did sleep, for the next day, Stephen was worse.

The deaths of Alen Therwith and Ruy Calidan were still the sole topic of conversation among the members of Stephen's church. Yet they were willing to wait until their minister was able to tell them all that had occurred. They had absolute faith in him, and while they were human enough to be unable to cease speculating about the event, there was no murmuring among them as the days of Stephen's illness ran on, and the mystery still hung about it all. Doro-

thea was proud to know that they trusted Stephen so, and she was glad to learn how much they all loved Stephen Lane. From one end of Staten Island to the other they came again and again to ask and she could see them going sorrowfully away as the days passed and the only word from the sick-room to them brought no hope.

Who can know what Dorothea's heart had to bear as she watched Stephen grow weaker and weaker with each passing day? His hands, now as thin and white as her own, moved incessantly over the bed-covers. Stephen's voice ran on and on ceaselessly. Much of it all she could not understand, yet once she caught her own name whispered over and over again, with none but herself to hear. But she could not banish from her mind the thought of what her name from his lips would mean, if he were himself.

Yet there was to be an end even to those long days. There came a night at last when they knew that the morning would bring with it the crisis. It was early in the evening and Dorothea was alone in the sick man's room. Both her mother and Janet were resting. Dorothea could just hear the low murmur of the voices of her father and Uncle Jacob in the kitchen below. Stephen lay motionless. Dorothea knew that his hands were quiet at last because he had become too weak to move. The girl looked ahead to the morning fearfully. What might it not bring? Then the brave heart gathered courage even though there seemed no hope or comfort anywhere. Dorothea turned to her Father in Heaven as trustfully and as simply as can only those who know what it

means to put their trust in Him. So over and over again she asked that Stephen Lane might be spared to grow well and strong again, to take his place, to carry on his good work as before. She had no thought for herself, nor did she ask this for any selfish reason. As she prayed, in spite of the uncertainty, peace and a new strength came to Dorothea. Thus through the long night she sat until at last she faced the morning calmly, confidently, knowing, believing, that no harm could come.

When at last the first light of dawn came struggling in at the window of the sick man's room in the white house on the Iron Hill, it found Stephen Lane with his mind clear again for the first time since his illness began. When Dorothea saw that his fever had indeed gone, she slipped quietly out of the room, leaving her mother to watch beside Stephen. The girl wanted to be alone with the great joy God had sent her—to thank Him with all her heart and soul for the mercy He had shown her.

Thus it was that when Stephen at last opened his eyes, he did not find the face of his dreams there beside him. For a little while he lay quiet, too weak to move, still too weary with his struggle against his fever to even think. At last memory began to return and his mind took up the painful thread of thought that had last been his before reason left him. He recalled the great injury he had done to Dorothea and the bitterness of his sin, as he felt it to be, overwhelmed him. Oh, that it should have been to Dorothea he had brought the sorrow! It would be better, Stephen thought, if he never saw her again.

Then he remembered that he must. Even in this state of slowly awakening consciousness, he knew that he must go to her and, hiding no part of his sin, tell her the whole truth. After Dorothea knew all the wrong he had done her, then Stephen hoped he might find some little measure of peace, and only then after many, many years of striving to live as a man should.

"I have taken from her all that there ever could be in life to make her happy, and just when it was all so young and fresh and pure. It has just been for my own selfishness and my desire to gratify what I was conceited enough to believe was my insight into the mystery concerning Ruy Calidan. I was quite willing to take this chance of destroying Dorothea's happiness for the sake of proving a most improbable supposition."

That it had been proved in spite of its improbability seemed immaterial to Stephen, for he thought only of the tragic consequence he had been unable to prevent.

Stephen Lane remembered with shame his words in his own pulpit when he told his people of what a man might be, and tried to show them the care they should use in guarding each other, if they desired to be truly unselfish. How far he had failed in following his own precepts! Not only had his own life failed, but in its failure he had brought unending days of loneliness to the very one whom he wanted to guard the most carefully.

Stephen felt that it would be long before he would be strong enough to face anyone, even those who had a right to know of all that had transpired that night

in the hut in the Valley of the Iron Hill. It was their right that they should know, and he knew that sooner or later he must tell them all that had happened—all but the part that touched Dorothea. That he could not tell. Stephen believed that none of them must trust him again. In his eyes, this made a new and controlling reason why there should be another minister for the church at the foot of the Iron Hill.

Stephen's mind wandered into the future. He saw a day that was soon to come when the coach that had brought him down the King's Highway that long-gone May day, would stop before the door of the little house, and the man who was once Stephen Lane would climb upon it. There would be none to tell him good-bye or to stay his going. He would be glad of that, he thought. Then as the stage moved off, he would take one last look at the church and at the little house. He would banish forever the recollection of the man who once stood under the apple-tree while the blossoms fell all about him. The apple-tree would be bare, just as he, because he had not been strong enough, would be stripped of all the splendid work with which he had dreamed to clothe his life. These are sad thoughts, whether a man be old or young. For the one there is no time to begin again. All that has been written is indelible, and the time that is left is too short to make the end different from the rest. With the other, with the man who is young, there is time, but who can tell whether having failed once, he may not well fail again? If Stephen Lane had been less a man, these thoughts would not have been in his mind. Had his love for Dorothea

been other than the true love it was, there would have been many thoughts in his mind—selfish thoughts of a happiness that might now be his. To a man and woman like Stephen and Dorothea, the pricelessness of affection and its unselfishness is fully apparent. Their lives are filled with truth and tenderness and they know that love is not something that existed long ago or that is to be found only in the pages of a book, and they know that longing and loneliness are but a part of the heart's measure of its happiness. Would that Stephen's condition had not made him so weak physically that his mind could only dwell on what he believed to be his sin.

Stephen Lane looked about the room. It was all unfamiliar. He tried in vain to reason out where he was, but his mind was unable to separate the unreal from the real in his recollection of the days that had just passed. While he was struggling thus, the door opened and there stood Dorothea Brevoort. Stephen was certain that his mind wandered, yet his eyes did not deceive him. To have looked at her, no one would have guessed all Dorothea had borne through the days, for the fresh colour and sweetness were there to make his eyes turn away in spite of their longing. The very sight of Dorothea brought a pain to Stephen too great at that instant to be borne. Dorothea hesitated at the threshold, for she was surprised to find her mother no longer with Stephen. Mrs. Brevoort had slipped away, believing that the sick man slept, and thus Stephen had been left alone with his thoughts.

“Stephen!” said Dorothea, softly, “Stephen!”

The sound of his name brought him sharply to the knowledge that the time had come far sooner than he had expected and before he was ready to face it, in which he must carry out the heavy penalty his sin had brought upon him. Because he was weak, because even had he been strong he would not have been certain that he possessed strength enough to carry it all through as he must, Stephen turned away with his face toward the wall, without a word. Dorothea stood motionless in the doorway as Stephen lay there silently struggling to gain his self-control.

This was Dorothea's reward. Not that in the days to come was she to remember Stephen's apparent avoidance of her, nor did she think of it at the time; she only feared that some new trouble had come to Stephen, and because her heart knew no circuitous way, but must go simply and directly to the object of its desire, Dorothea crossed the room swiftly and knelt down beside the bed, and her hand sought Stephen's and held it tight. Nor had Dorothea a thought for her action. Thus it is that a time comes to every woman when she puts aside with no loss to her dignity the restraint she has been taught and speaks and acts as God intended she should, frankly, truthfully, as her heart demands.

"Stephen," Dorothea whispered, "what is it?"

For a long moment, Stephen Lane was silent. The warm clasp of her hand brought new life and strength to him. His own hand tingled and burned beneath her mere touch. Stephen felt his courage coming to him again. He was more ready for the struggle now. At last he turned and looked up into

the face so close to his. It would be better to have it over with at once. Dorothea should begin to despise him at that very instant, rather than that he should wait, hiding like a coward behind the fact of his illness, while he enjoyed her sympathy and care, until he was well. He would be man enough, at least, to tell her the whole, miserable truth. That would be the end. Stephen opened his lips to speak. As he did so, he looked at Dorothea and her eyes were searching his. In them, Stephen Lane saw that which has never needed words to tell. It was neither to be denied, nor was it ashamed, and his own heart went to meet Dorothea's, while the sin that had lain so heavily on Stephen was forgotten. Dorothea's head moved slowly closer to his until her cheek almost touched Stephen's. But Stephen raised his hand and held her, stopping her.

"You must not," he whispered. "I—I am unworthy. When you have listened to all I must tell you, you will know I am right."

Dorothea shook her head.

"No," she replied, "I will only know that you are still ill and weak. But you are not to talk—you are just to lie here quietly."

"You don't understand," Stephen whispered again. "You must go away from me. You must not touch me or have anything to do with me."

Dorothea was not to be thus put aside. Yet she withdrew her hand and looked at him long and steadily. Stephen saw again that which he had never suspected could be. It was all so far beyond the bounds of possibility that he could scarcely comprehend it.

Despite the eager longing of his heart, he could not forget the little remnant of manhood he believed was still his, nor could he do other than remember the harm he thought he had done Dorothea. Yet now that this moment had come to them, now that he had seen in her eyes what would never need to be confessed, what was to be the end of these things? With an effort, Stephen gathered himself together, fighting desperately against himself.

"You must leave me," he said. "You must go away. I am not strong enough to tell you why, only you must go. I implore you to go!" he said, as Dorothea did not move.

She saw now what in the happiness of having him himself again she had not stopped to consider—how ill he was. Dorothea was alarmed at the thought of what effect this might have upon him.

"I will go," she said gently, "only you must rest. Promise me that."

Then, before he could stop her, she bent again over the pillow and her lips touched Stephen's forehead lightly.

"Stephen, dear," she said.

Then she was gone.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SONG OF THE PINES

STEPHEN LANE did not know until long afterward that his excited condition that day caused Mrs. Brevoort to banish Dorothea from his room for the week that followed. Sometimes Stephen tried to be glad that Dorothea did not come, for it gave him the opportunity to think and think clearly just what it was that he must do. In spite of his returning strength, he was dispirited and melancholy, body and mind alike being filled with an overwhelming sense of depression. His distrust and abhorrence of himself was so strong that, for the time, all the cheerfulness that had helped everyone with whom he came in contact, gave place to a despondency too deep to be pierced by even so blessed a ray of happiness as that which his talk with Dorothea should have been to him. It was not that his mind dwelt on the tragedy that had occurred, though he found himself deeply impressed by its awfulness. His own fault and the wrong he had done Dorothea was what distressed him and made him unfair with himself and unreasonable. In the darkest of it he doubted the reality of Dorothea's words, doubted what his ears had heard and his eyes seen, almost doubted even his heart. It was all a mistake. He would wake some morning and find that Dorothea knew him as he was, and knowing,

would despise him as he deserved. Stephen hoped for her own sake that it would be possible for Dorothea to avoid him. At least that would be the easier way for Dorothea, till he was strong enough to go out of the house and so out of her sight and life. He promised himself that his departure would not be delayed a day longer than his strength would permit.

Many days passed before his strength returned sufficiently for him to sit up for a while. In spirit he progressed even more slowly, for with the constant thinking and the hopelessness of it, there was nothing to lift him above the utter despair that filled his whole being. Yet within him something was growing stronger and stronger, till at last he had to heed it. For a long time, because of his self-distrust, he would not let himself listen. He fought it with the thought that the time was soon coming when he should go away. He looked forward almost eagerly to the day that, with uncertain steps, he would make his way about the room. It would not be long after that day that he would be gone. And then alone, he would have the years in which to gain such a mastery over his heart that its love would never find expression even in thought.

A few days later, Mrs. Brevoort moved an easy chair over by the window. From it Stephen could look down the slope across the level land where that mad race had been run. He sought to shut the recollection from him. It was better to look across to the trees of Red Lane, yet the happy things it suggested brought to him a pain so sharp that it was more than Stephen could bear. He rose and walked

across the room with steps that, though they trembled, almost suggested the quick, energetic movement that was once so characteristic of him. Then he stopped and looked about the room. Everywhere was the peace and quiet of the old Dutch house. He could not hear a sound. He recalled all that this home had meant to him through the days of his illness, and he realised now for the first time how different it all was from his own lonely life. Everything about him spoke of Dorothea, Dorothea everywhere.

Stephen Lane determined in that moment to put away once and for all the temptation that was urging him almost irresistibly since that day Dorothea had come to him as he lay there in bed, conscious for the first time. He knew his own weakness too well, for had he not fallen in the face of a less temptation, the temptation that had come to him when Ruy Calidan showed him the little box? Stephen went out into the hall and made his way slowly down the stairs to the larger hall below.

"I must do it now," he found himself whispering. "I must end it now."

The main hall of the white house was almost in darkness. Just a bit of remaining daylight crept in through the panes at the side of the front door. Stephen paused a moment at the door of the sitting-room, which was ajar. It was light in the room because the glow of the sunset still brightened the west windows. Stephen noted the Dutch furniture and cleanliness everywhere. How different it was from his own sitting-room. Yet Stephen thought with a pang that even that must be given up. Ah, well,

after Dorothea, what did that matter? Stephen looked about the room again. The twilight touched everything lovingly, filling the room with a soft, subdued light. Stephen opened the door a little bit wider. As he did so, he heard the sound of music, and a low sweet voice, Dorothea's voice, singing the old, familiar song that in those days was as dear to them as it still is to some. Stephen paused in the doorway. The words of the song made him recall that by a singular coincidence, they were the very words written on the bit of paper in the little box.

Both words and music seemed to have been meant just for Dorothea, for the dear voice that was so low and sweet and tender. He knew she was singing to herself and to him. His heart told him that her heart was listening to the song and waiting, even as he was listening and waiting. The resolution was gone. He knew that this moment was theirs, always and forever. The twilight, the room, the quiet, all whispered the same thing. Stephen stepped quietly into the room. Dorothea did not observe him. Softly the words rose and fell with the melody—

“Shadows of sad Things that are dear,
The Pine-trees whisper a Melody—”

Stephen's heart could wait no longer. He never remembered crossing the room. There was just a little, smothered sound, and the song ended. Then for a long time there was neither movement nor sound, while the light from the windows faded and twilight gathered and darkness came and filled the room.

At last they heard Janet coming down the hall bearing a lamp with her, its glow creeping in through the half-open door so that they saw each other's faces long before she entered. When the lamp was on the table and Janet gone, Stephen walked over to Dorothea again, and standing before her, looked down at her with all his manhood showing in his face.

"Dorothea," he said, "you remember I tried to tell you something that day you came to me when I was first myself again? I must tell you now."

Dorothea rose and stood close before him and put one hand on each of Stephen's shoulders.

"Yes," she said, "I will listen now, only first——"

"First what, dear?" asked Stephen.

"Don't you see? I can't say it first," replied Dorothea.

Then Stephen understood, and putting his arms around Dorothea, bent close to her.

"I will say it, and then you must," he said, "but not until you have listened to me, for then—then you may not want to."

Dorothea looked up at him and smiled.

"I am not afraid," she said simply. Then she and Stephen Lane looked at each other as they had once before, but what Stephen whispered only Dorothea heard. There were tears in the eyes of both.

"It's a long story," he began, "and you will please let me tell you all of it—then——"

"Then——" said Dorothea.

"It is all so different from what I planned," he began. "I never let myself think it possible that you should care. With all my strength I was trying to

hide even from myself what you were to me, because it had become wrong for me to do otherwise."

"Wrong, Stephen?" asked Dorothea. "I do not understand."

"I was told," said Stephen hastily, "that you and Alen—that you——" He found the words harder to say than he imagined.

"Oh," exclaimed Dorothea, "surely not that! I can't think who could have told you so untrue a thing."

It was Stephen's turn to be perplexed.

"Didn't you—weren't you——" Then there flashed through his mind the solution of it.

"Stephen," she said, "they all tried to make me, but I could not do it. I almost hated Alen. I could not bear even to be near him. And then—Father accused me of—oh, I can't tell you, Stephen."

"Of what, dear?" asked Stephen gently.

Dorothea turned away and her voice was so low that Stephen could scarcely catch the words.

"Of caring for you, Stephen, of trying to get you to love me, and all the time——" Dorothea went on.

"All the time?" said Stephen.

"All the time," said Dorothea, "I loved you with my whole heart and soul, ever since you first came."

When Dorothea looked at Stephen again, he seemed a different man from the one who had come into the room in the twilight. All the burden that had been so heavy upon him had been taken away by Dorothea's words forever. It was clear now to Stephen that Alen Therwith had imposed upon him even in this, the greatest thing of all. Stephen saw now

what Alen had planned, and he made a guess that was not far from the truth as to the manner in which Alen expected to succeed. Stephen Lane saw that there was no need of Dorothea ever knowing of the net that had been woven so closely about her. That which Stephen had deemed his own sin faded in the light of this new happiness until he saw it rightly, as he should have seen it from the first. Stephen laughed a happy little laugh.

"I have nothing more to tell you, Dorothea dear," he said. "If you will, you may say it now."

Dorothea smiled at him bravely.

"I love you, Stephen," she said.

Then for a long while there was silence.

There came to Stephen's mind no sense of exultation or of triumph. To meaner natures than his it might have been so, but to Stephen Lane the load of love and trust that Dorothea brought to him but filled him with a greater humility, rousing in him all the tenderness and strength his heart could find to guard and shield Dorothea. Nor was any other thought possible to either of them. The boundless measure of their affection brought to them from its very preciousness the knowledge of what God intended it should mean to them. There could be nothing in their future, whether they were together or apart, that could make the slightest difference to either of them. No loneliness, no separation, nothing could change it. So it must always be when love comes. So it can never be where there is taken for love anything that is baser.

CHAPTER XXVIII

STEPHEN RECOUNTS THE NIGHT IN THE HUT

EVEN in the happiness that was now their precious possession, Stephen and Dorothea could not think just of themselves, nor could they forget what had occurred. Neither of them wanted to neglect the duties that were theirs, for it made their having each other worth so much more.

"Stephen," said Dorothea, "for a while, at least, we must go on just as before. It seems wrong for us to be so wonderfully happy so soon after the deaths of Ruy and Alen."

"Not wrong, Dorothea," replied Stephen. "There can never be anything wrong about happiness. It is better to have it all as you suggest. There is still a great deal that must be done, that I must do, before we can put aside what has happened and take up things as before. I don't mean that we are to forget anything that has passed, but merely that we are not to dwell upon it. There is much that has yet to be told, much that all must understand."

"Oh, Stephen!" exclaimed Dorothea, "since you have been ill, I have given myself no time to think of the part you had to play in those terrible times. Is that what you mean when you speak of what will have to be told?"

The thought made Dorothea put her arms about

Stephen's neck and draw his head down till it rested against her shoulder, as though to shield him from even the recollection of that night.

"Now that we have each other," said Stephen, "we will work together and share everything together so that there will be no room in the life of either of us for anything but new usefulness. And happiness will come from having done our work the best we can—we will laugh together over the failures I make."

"Failures!" exclaimed Dorothea, "there have been none, nor will there be any. Sometimes, Stephen, I think that is why I care most—because you have never faltered nor failed, because through all this time, (though I never knew) you were guarding me and shielding me so that I was safe. Oh, Stephen, think of what might have happened had not you been watching over me! And all the time I was thinking that what I treasured in my heart meant nothing to you."

"And all the time I was struggling to keep you from seeing," replied Stephen. Then after a pause—"All that has happened, Dorothea, has been a great shock to everyone. Even your father will not realise for a long time the change that has come. And I must not forget that the Elders and the members of my congregation have been waiting patiently for me to grow strong enough to clear away the mystery that has surrounded the deaths of Alen and Ruy, which must have been almost incomprehensible to them through all this long time."

Even while he was speaking, Stephen found diffi-

culty in determining the course he should pursue. Dorothea knew nothing of the events of that night except such disconnected facts as he himself had told Jacob Brevoort in the few moments of consciousness that followed his entrance into the kitchen of the white house. Stephen wanted to spare Dorothea a knowledge of such details as would only render the horror of it all the more indelible in her mind. Yet he knew that Dorothea must at last learn of Ruy's history, and sooner or later see Alen Therwith's life in its true light. Stephen thought of his people, of the Elders of his church waiting without question until such time as he was able to tell them of all that had stirred them and all of Staten Island as well, as had nothing ever before. Stephen's heart rejoiced at the confidence they thus showed that they had in him. He would not let them wait long now, but first of all there was much that Dorothea must know.

"Through all the time, Dorothea," Stephen began, "I have been struggling with myself in the effort to make myself do what I thought I should. Because we have each other, everything is easy, everything is possible. Lest I should fail utterly in your eyes, I have been telling myself since it was decided that I must go away, that it was only by going away that I could force myself to let you have what Alen led me to believe you had found to be your happiness. Yet all the time you knew, did you not, Dorothea?"

But Dorothea shook her head.

"I never thought of anything but wanting to comfort you, Stephen," she replied simply. "I guess no

one has ever been so queer about it as I, for I would not let myself think of anything but just that. The time has been so long and hard. That day in the Lane—oh, Stephen, I could not bear to think what it meant to you to go away and leave behind you your work and all these good people who love you so and who need you. But I would not let my heart think of what it meant to me.”

“The only hard part was the thought of leaving you, Dorothea,” said Stephen. “I tried to be brave and unselfish as you are, dear, but I could not. I wanted you so.”

In the silence that followed, Stephen wondered again whether it would not be better for him to tell Dorothea Alen Therwith’s true story. But for that night at least, he could not bring himself to tell her even a part of it. For that night there should be nothing but the wonderful precious possession of each other. For the first time he knew that which he never even dreamed could be true—that it was not wrong for him to tell Dorothea that he loved her, and to claim the heart that he had so long sought. So for that night, Stephen Lane put away everything but their new-found happiness and the joy of sharing each other as a man and woman only can when God has sent to them that which is most precious here on earth.

Later that same evening, the Elders of the Moravian Church gathered in the kitchen of the white house to hear at last from Stephen’s lips the story of the tragic end of Alen Therwith and Ruy Calidan. Stephen stood before them all, a little older, a little

graver than before, with the marks of his long illness still heavy upon him. But the happiness that had come to him that very day brought something to his face and to his very poise that betokened the strength that had come to him because his heart's loneliness had ended forever. Happiness made the warm blood of life flow through his frame again as God intended it should, so that Stephen's task that night was easy. He looked from face to face and noted the eagerness with which they waited. Yet how sure they were of him, and how their confidence in him was apparent, even to his own mind, that in his illness had been so ready to believe that these very men had lost respect for him.

"There is very little to tell," he began. "The facts are meagre, yet I will try to relate to you all that has occurred in just the order of its happening. There is nothing that I want you to infer, no suggestion that you are to believe I make that will lead you to conclude that I have any judgment to pass either upon the facts themselves or the persons connected with them. I am only sorry that it has been my part to witness these things, yet just as my work in life leads me along certain lines, so I have come to know of all that I will tell you, because it was in a sense part of my work. I have considered carefully whether it was right that I should let you know of things that can only reflect harshly on someone who has been here among us, but I have remembered that sooner or later all that I might tell you now will have to be told when the law itself inquires into the manner of the death of these two. More than this, I have

felt it a duty I owe to all of you, because of what we have shared together, to tell you first and fully before anyone else knows."

"We understand you, Stephen Lane," said Jacob Brevoort, and from the others came a low murmur of assent, save from Peter Brevoort, who sat stolidly smoking, his hat on the back of his head, his legs spread out in front of him. Stephen Lane looked about him confidently. Then he smiled at the thought of the beginning he must make in the telling of the story.

"Do not think I am trying to gain your indulgence for anything I have done myself," he said, "when I tell you that many of our church misunderstood and disapproved of my friendship for Ruy Calidan. I do not blame anyone among you for thinking Ruy a strange creature or believing that he was more to be feared than trusted. There is much that I might tell you about him, bearing on these things, but I take it I have no right to go into them except in so far as they affect what occurred in the hut in the Valley of the Iron Hill. Yet when you have heard even the little I have to tell, perhaps you will not wonder that Ruy was the wild, untamed creature you knew him to be."

Those about Stephen drew closer with an interest in his words so intense that a great silence filled the room.

"Ruy Calidan's mother," Stephen went on, "was a Spaniard, and his father a Welshman, so Ruy told me. He himself was born somewhere in South America, and shortly afterward, his father disap-

peared. It was from both of them that Ruy inherited his great strength—a strength of which, in his father, his mother liked to boast, even though she hated him. Whatever teaching the mother gave to Ruy, it was first and only this—this seeking for his father, this desire for revenge, this satisfying of an old wrong. It became part of the boy's life as much as it was of hers. Indeed, every peculiarity of his mind and body seemed but to accentuate this one impelling force in his life, blotting out all else."

Then Stephen went on to tell them of the little box and the verses, that, for some unknown reason, the man who was Ruy's father would be forced to recognise and thus admit his identity.

"The improbability of success in his search seemed only to strengthen Ruy's desire to stand at last face to face with the man who was his father. It consumed his very soul. Yet the ending of the story will show you its intensity far more than can any words of mine."

Then Stephen described so graphically that his hearers lived again with him the scene in the hut in the Valley of the Iron Hill, every incident of that fateful night, till at last they plunged with him out into the darkness of the night, and the storm, with Ruy's wild cry still ringing in their ears.

"There is nothing more to tell," Stephen added. "I made my way after them as fast as I could. When I reached the sea, they were gone."

Stephen's quiet words and quieter manner accentuated the horror of the wild, weird scene he had described. A deep silence fell upon them when Stephen

ceased speaking. Their slower minds needed time to comprehend, to realise, what the story really meant.

At last John Blake spoke.

"Alen Therwith," he said, shaking his head, "Alen Therwith. I should never have believed it."

At his words, the others found their tongues again, talking in low, suppressed voices. At last Thomas Witte turned to Stephen.

"The box," he said slowly. "What became of the box?"

Until that moment, in spite of all the days that had elapsed, Stephen had not thought of it. Where indeed was the box?

"I don't know," said Stephen. "It was in Alen's hand when Ruy turned from the fire and looked down at him. I have not the slightest idea what became of it."

Peter Brevoort turned in his chair.

"You speak well, Thomas Witte," he said. "Where is the box? All that's tangible in the story is the fact that Alen and the boy are dead. Where's the box, indeed, or anything else, to prove that the whole of it is not the fever that has been on the minister?"

"Oh, no, you can't mean that, Peter," broke in the dry shrill voice of Thaddeus Knox.

Peter Brevoort ran his eye from one disapproving face to another. Then he shifted his position uneasily.

"Let's find the box," he said. "That's all I say."

Stephen Lane smiled. For himself he did not care for the insinuation in Peter Brevoort's words. It was

only for Dorothea, for the hurt he knew she would have felt, had she known.

"By all means," he said, "let us try to find the box."

Thaddeus Knox rose and buttoned his old brown coat and picked up his hat with a hand that trembled.

"Wait here, friends," he said. "It is but a step to the Valley and the hut. If the box is there, I'll find it and bring it to you."

When he was gone, the others crowded about Stephen, all indeed, except Peter Brevoort, and plied him with questions, all of which he answered fully, save when they wandered from the facts he told them and inquired of his own suspicions or the inference he or his listeners might draw from what he had related.

The minutes passed. It was thus that Thaddeus Knox found them when he entered triumphant with the box in one hand and the bit of paper in the other. For him, it was a complete verification of Stephen's story. Not that any was needed, but here was tangible proof and they all gathered eagerly about him while they examined the little box and the faded writing.

"Stephen," said Jacob Brevoort, when he had seen the paper, "do you think Ruy's mother copied this?"

Stephen Lane shook his head.

"Now you are wanting my opinion," he said, "yet since you ask, I think it was not Ruy's mother who copied the verses."

At Stephen's words, all of them looked again at the paper, even more eagerly, as though it could un-

THE SONG OF THE PINES 389

fold some other chapter that they longed to know. Yet could they have known, could Stephen Lane have told them of the time so long ago when the paper itself was fresh and the words it held meant nothing to a shepherd boy far away in the Welsh mountains, they would have looked more eagerly still.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE ELDERS' REQUEST IS COMPLIED WITH

It is easy to understand how the strange story told by Stephen Lane spread throughout the length and breadth of Staten Island, and grew with each telling out of all resemblance to its original self. Those who loved him unconsciously repeated the story so that Stephen appeared in a braver light, and those who listened told it again, dwelling still more on what they believed to have been the minister's part in it, until it at last appeared that he had done some great deed, more splendid than any other of which they knew. Their pride in him before was as nothing compared to that which was roused by his part in this.

In telling the story to Dorothea, Stephen added all that he felt to have been his own weakness. He tried to show Dorothea plainly how he had been willing to jeopardise her happiness for the sake of verifying his suspicion. He made his sin, as he believed it to be, as clear to Dorothea as words could. He placed it all before her in the light he saw it, that she too might realise just where his fault lay. Stephen did not spare himself at all. Yet Dorothea saw in spite of Stephen's words that in truth he had saved her from all that threatened to overcome her, from everything she had found stronger than herself through those days. Her heart told her how great the escape

had been. No one could know what it meant to find herself free from all that threatened to overcome her, and to find that it was Stephen who had saved her was the greatest happiness of all. Dorothea realised that the test Stephen had planned for Alen Therwith would have wrought no injustice to anyone, even if it had failed. Thus as always, a woman's intuition served more truly than a man's reason. Always afterward, Dorothea found the greatest comfort in the knowledge that Stephen's care had been about her when she did not know—he had been willing to stand silently by, watching over her lest some harm might touch her, with no thought that his care made any difference to her. It had all been for no reason other than because he wanted to make her happiness secure.

No one saw more clearly than did Stephen Lane the great loss Alen Therwith's death brought Peter Brevoort. Stephen was apprehensive about it only lest it should bring added harshness toward Dorothea because of the bitterness of this disappointment to her father. Stephen was forced to the conclusion that it was Alen himself who had planned much that had gone before. He believed he saw how step by step, slowly, cautiously, Alen had worked with the one object of entangling Dorothea more closely in the net he was weaving about her, until it would become impossible for her to free herself from him. How cleverly Peter Brevoort had been made to bear a share in it all! Stephen recalled Dorothea's work at the schoolhouse, Alen's talk with him, and then the request the Elders had made of their minister. In two

of these instances at least, Peter Brevoort had appeared to be the originator of the plan, but now Stephen Lane saw the same hand in all—the hand of Alen Therwith.

A few nights later, three men marched arm in arm up the road to the white house on the Iron Hill. Stephen was the centre of the three, and his face, so often grave, had lost its seriousness. He was laughing like a boy, even though his mind had not forgotten its responsibilities. On Stephen's right was Thaddeus Knox, with his faded brown coat flapping in the breeze. The remaining member of the trio was Thomas Witte, his sides shaking with merriment, and his breath coming in short, quick gasps, from the effort of walking. Stephen's high spirits made all their hearts young again. They reached the summit of the Iron Hill and the great white house stood before them. Stephen's eyes sought the window at the side of the house that looked down the Iron Hill toward his own. The lamplight in the kitchen shone a welcome from the little, clean panes of glass, the very ones from which Peter Brevoort peered out into the darkness that night so short a time before when harm almost touched Dorothea. When they entered, they found the rest there before them, John Blake talking with Peter and Jacob Brevoort. As they shook hands, it was apparent that they were all excited. Not only did they rejoice over Stephen and his happiness, but because of what it meant to the church at the foot of the Iron Hill, for which they had worked so faithfully.

It was a meeting of the Elders they were to hold,

yet how different from those which had preceded it. It was a meeting (as Thaddeus Knox himself said) "such as the church had never seen since it was started." No wonder those men were happy that night, for their church and for Stephen Lane, too. Even Peter Brevoort caught just a glimpse of the warm, kindly feeling that filled the hearts of the rest. They sat about the great kitchen for a few moments in silence. Then Thaddeus Knox rose. His shrill, keen voice had a warm kindly tone, though it faltered just a little bit, and something he had to say made his lips tremble, and then, to hide it, his voice was sharper and dryer than ever.

"I guess you all know what I have to say," he began, "yet we must make it part of our records as Elders. The minister," he said, trying to control his voice, "the minister has reconsidered. He is quite willing to follow the suggestion made to him by the Elders. He is going to have a wife."

Thaddeus Knox's hands sought Stephen's. His voice was little more than a whisper.

"God bless you, Stephen," he said. "God bless you both."

Stephen rose and stood beside him and took his outstretched hands. Stephen's figure was in strong contrast with the little man beside him. Oh, that you might have heard Stephen Lane's voice as he answered Thaddeus Knox! Oh, that Dorothea might have been there to hear and see it all, for Stephen spoke as can only a man who has himself suffered.

"I thank you," said Stephen simply, "for Dorothea and for myself. We know what you want to

say, and for my part," turning to the others, "I have tried to serve you and serve the church faithfully, always since I have been here. From this time on I shall try as never before, because of the help I have. You were quite right. The church did need a minister who had a wife. If I do not make our work here as you believe it should be, the fault will be only mine."

One by one the Elders rose, all save Peter Brevoort, and came over to where Stephen Lane stood, and shook hands with him silently, as do men who rejoice together because some good thing has come to pass. No wonder it was a night none of them would forget.

At last Peter Brevoort too, arose. The others stood silent and apart as they watched him approach Stephen Lane. The two looked at each other gravely for a moment, Stephen's face by far too serious. Then they grasped each other's hands, Peter Brevoort's mouth twitching strangely as he did so.

"Stephen," he said, "Stephen."

That was all. Yet what a difference it would make to Dorothea's happiness.

Jacob Brevoort broke the silence that followed.

"It is the best day," he said, "the best day I ever hope to live to see."

There is little more to tell. Yet even at the risk of growing wearisome, there must be recorded here what may seem to some a fitting crown to the days that have gone before. Other times have come and gone and other men and women lived in the land nobly and bravely, or selfishly, as the case may be, as did those

who are found in these pages. It will come to pass as the years slip away, that the memory of this will fade as have faded the days themselves.

It was night. The air was heavy with the sweetness of Spring. Again the apple tree under which Stephen Lane stood that first day was dressed in white, even as then. The wind whispered strange fancies among the new leaves on the trees, and along Red Lane the violets were hidden in the grass.

The Brevoort kitchen was the scene of many busy preparations. Through the open window, Dorothea and her mother and Mary Blake could be seen still at work preparing for the great event of the morrow. As for Janet, she had long since lost her self-possession in the whirl of getting ready. But now the work was ended and something drew the three women closer together, and the love of each for the other went out as never before. On this night of nights, there was to be no touch of sadness, if each could only be brave enough to keep it hidden. For a while they sat close together in silence. Then Dorothea rose.

"I want to be quite alone, Mother," she said. "I want to tell you good-night, now, and Mary, too."

Then she put her arms about her friend, and Mary's strong ones clasped about her. Then Dorothea turned to her mother's sheltering arms. How long the years had been since the little child slept there. Dorothea smiling, said:

"They are never to be empty, Mother."

Mrs. Brevoort smiled back at her daughter bravely. This was only a part of the mother love. When

Dorothea was gone, the two women found she had taken all the cheerfulness with her.

Dorothea was glad that the long hall was dark, much darker than on that late afternoon when Stephen came down from his room after his illness, with his resolve firmly fixed, a resolve that left him at the door where Dorothea paused now, that she might think again of that afternoon. Oh, blessed twilight of that other day, to be cherished always among the sacred things that her heart held.

Then Dorothea went softly up the stairs. In her own room there were flowers. Dorothea took part of them into her mother's room. Then she went back to the room that had been hers as long as she could remember. She wanted to pause for just a little space of time as she waited for the great change that was to come to her. She went to her window, and as always, her gaze found its way down the side of the Iron Hill to the light in Stephen's study. She was conscious of nothing but that light. She did not notice the cool, Spring air against her cheek, nor did she think of all the nights that had found her standing thus in the window, watching the light. Dorothea's eyes grew more soft and tender than ever before. So it always is with the pure when there is none to see save only the One who knows every heart.

Another night would find her in her place beside Stephen. There would be no more long, long nights with the space between them across which the lonely light travelled. Oh, wonderful day that brought such trust and hopefulness, such strength and tenderness, so that all else could be laid aside with no thought

other than of content because life had become broader and better than before! Nor was there any thought in Dorothea's mind of burdens to be borne, for thereafter she and Stephen would face them together.

Another night had come. The light was burning again in Stephen's study, but the wonderful time had come when a woman lived in the little house beside the church. In the white house on the Iron Hill, in the room filled with dainty, sweet things, a woman found her way and stooped beside Dorothea's bed, and the hands that were old with the work and with the years, old and rough, (yet they had not forgotten how to be gentle) sought the coverlet as though some sleeper were there to be kept warm and safe. Oh, how still the room was, with only the faint light struggling in through the window! Then there was a whisper—a broken one.

“Little Dorothea, my little girl.”

“Dorothea,” said Stephen, “you must tell me that it is quite true.”

Dorothea smiled at him.

“It is quite true, Stephen,” she said dutifully. Then they laughed, and the little room that had seen so many long nights of work was transformed at the sound, even as was its owner, and the lonely years and the shadows that had marked them had gone forever, and all that was left behind were the lines in Stephen's face that should not have been there. Dorothea whispered something of this to him, but Stephen only looked at her and his eyes grew thoughtful in a way she liked to see.

"Now that it is all passed," said Stephen quietly, "I am glad, for the burdens have made me what I am, Dorothea, so that you can find in me whatever it is that you love. Without them I should have been less of a man even than you will find me to be. Yet I am afraid it has all been harder for you than for me."

Dorothea stopped him there.

"No, Stephen," she said, "it has not been harder for me. I cannot bear to think what might have happened had not you been watching over me when I did not even know."

"I was afraid you would see and send me away from you," said Stephen. Dorothea looked at him. She felt that she was just beginning to understand.

"From the first day, Stephen," she said, "from the day Mary came and told me that she had met you in the road, and we looked from my window and saw you standing on the porch here, I seemed to know just how it would be. Then I saw you gaining the respect and love of everyone, and that they trusted you and that you never failed them or let them find that they had trusted you in vain. I think it was that, Stephen, that made me love you most of all."

Stephen shook his head. Then he put his hands on Dorothea's shoulders and so they stood with their eyes answering each other.

"Dorothea," he said, "as long as life is left in me, and afterward, if I may, there will be nothing but all the tenderness and care my heart can find to keep the love so closely about you that no harm can come at all."

EPILOGUE

AUTUMN days were shining. The blue haze hung over the hills, and along Red Lane the dry leaves came tumbling down. One morning the sunshine was bright over everything. Far, far away among the Welsh mountains it was day, too. It was one so clear that the eye could see for miles down the slope to the west toward the sea, if one stood where long ago a woman stood and looked upon it and marvelled at the beauty of it all. Over and over again since that day it had been morning and evening and morning again, and it may be that there has been none there to see it as the woman did. It was only to a shepherd boy she tried to tell the secret of what she felt in what she saw. Perhaps it was too impossible to hope that he would ever come to understand. She could never have known those two walking that October day in Red Lane, and they in turn, could never have known of the woman who once, long ago, told the shepherd boy of the most wonderful thing in the world. Her words were not her own, but the things the heart finds to say do not depend upon words alone to tell what is true. It was only that the woman saw everywhere, in the mountains, the sky and the distant sea, that which Dorothea and Stephen found in Red Lane, in the Iron Hill, in the sea before it. Yet I am not sure that the woman's effort to awaken the

heart of that boy did not in its time bring good into the world, or add some measure to the good that was already there. For who can say that Alen Therwith's part in these things was in vain, even though his own life fell short of what it might have been. Stephen himself was more of a man because of Alen Therwith. After all, it is a queer tangle—these poor lives of ours—when all is said and done. Perhaps it would have been better had Alen Therwith stayed among the Welsh mountains or lived and died on the level land beside the sea in South America. Yet I like to believe that things were best as they were, for in the end, much that was good was achieved, and happiness was brought to one heart at least, that should have known happiness.

Still through this old world, the trees and the sea and all about us whisper of this same thing. So it will be as long as there live those who find happiness in the best their hearts can tell them, and the strength to be all they may. So the song of the pines is of a love that has no end, that has no beginning, that is only measured by the heart's ability to understand.

THE END

CHILD OF THE STARS

BY

ROBERT VALENTINE MATHEWS

Five illustrations, 12mo, cloth. 160 pages. Price, \$1.00.

"Like a group of delicate, faintly tinted aquarelles is 'Child of the Stars,' by Robert Valentine Mathews."

—*Chicago Record-Herald*.

"The book is deliciously reminiscent and holds all the redolence of such a narrative."—*Charlotte Republican*.

THE LIFE OF ALFRED DE MUSSET

BY

ARVÈDE BARINE

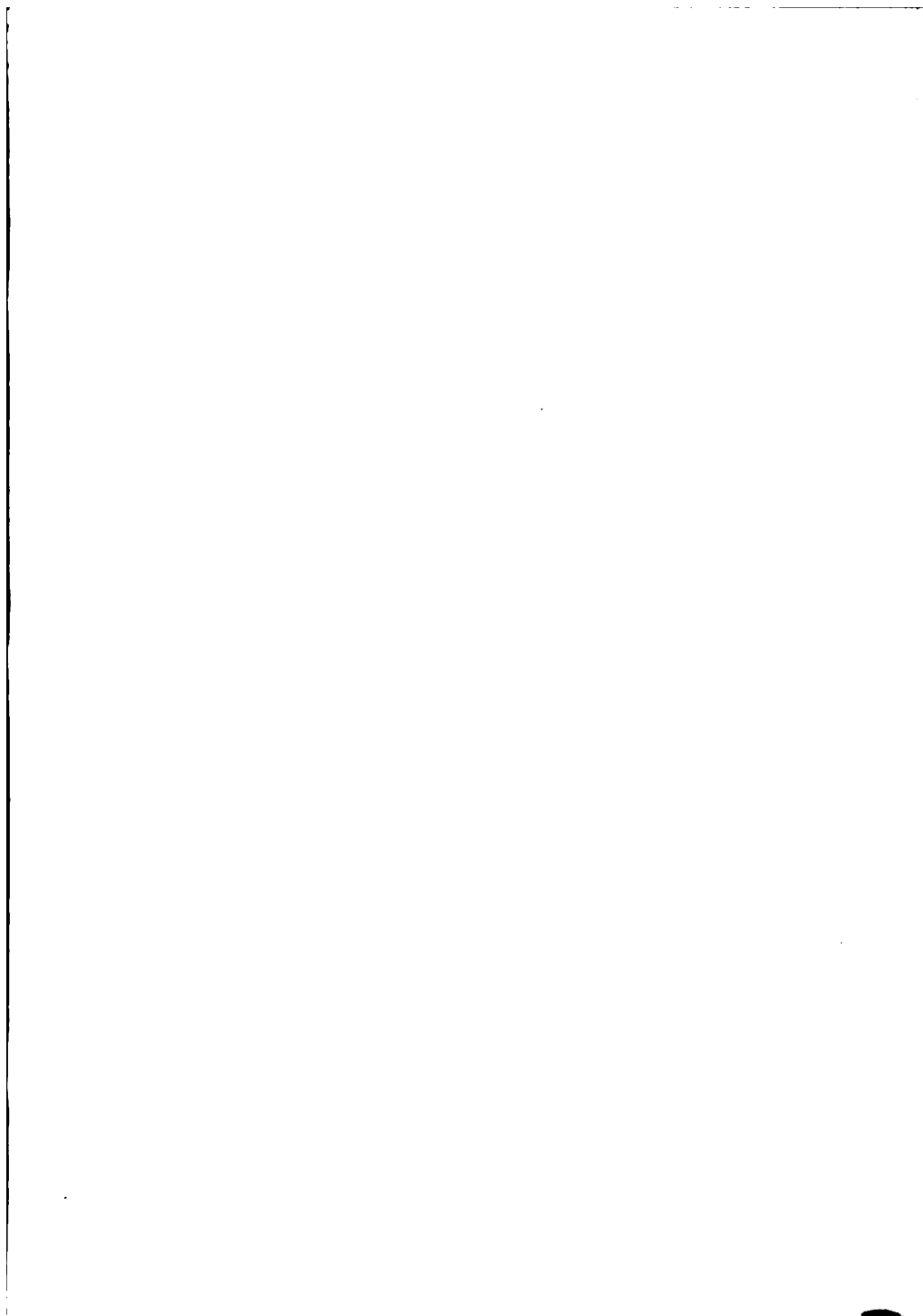
Translated by CHARLES CONNER HAYDEN, with a portrait of Alfred de Musset. 176 pages, 8vo. Price, \$1.50.

"The most striking figure in the literature of modern France."—*Chambers Encyclopaedia*.

"The most beloved author of France."—H. A. TAINÉ, author of "History of English Literature."

"A writer who never sacrificed the dignity of art to the ambitions of fortune and position."—ALEXANDER DUMAS.

22



APR 6 - 1955



